

The 2009 National School Climate Survey

The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual and Transgender Youth
in Our Nation's Schools



A Report from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
www.glsen.org

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**The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual and Transgender Youth
in Our Nation's Schools**

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GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For more information on our educator resources, research, public policy agenda, student leadership programs, or development initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.

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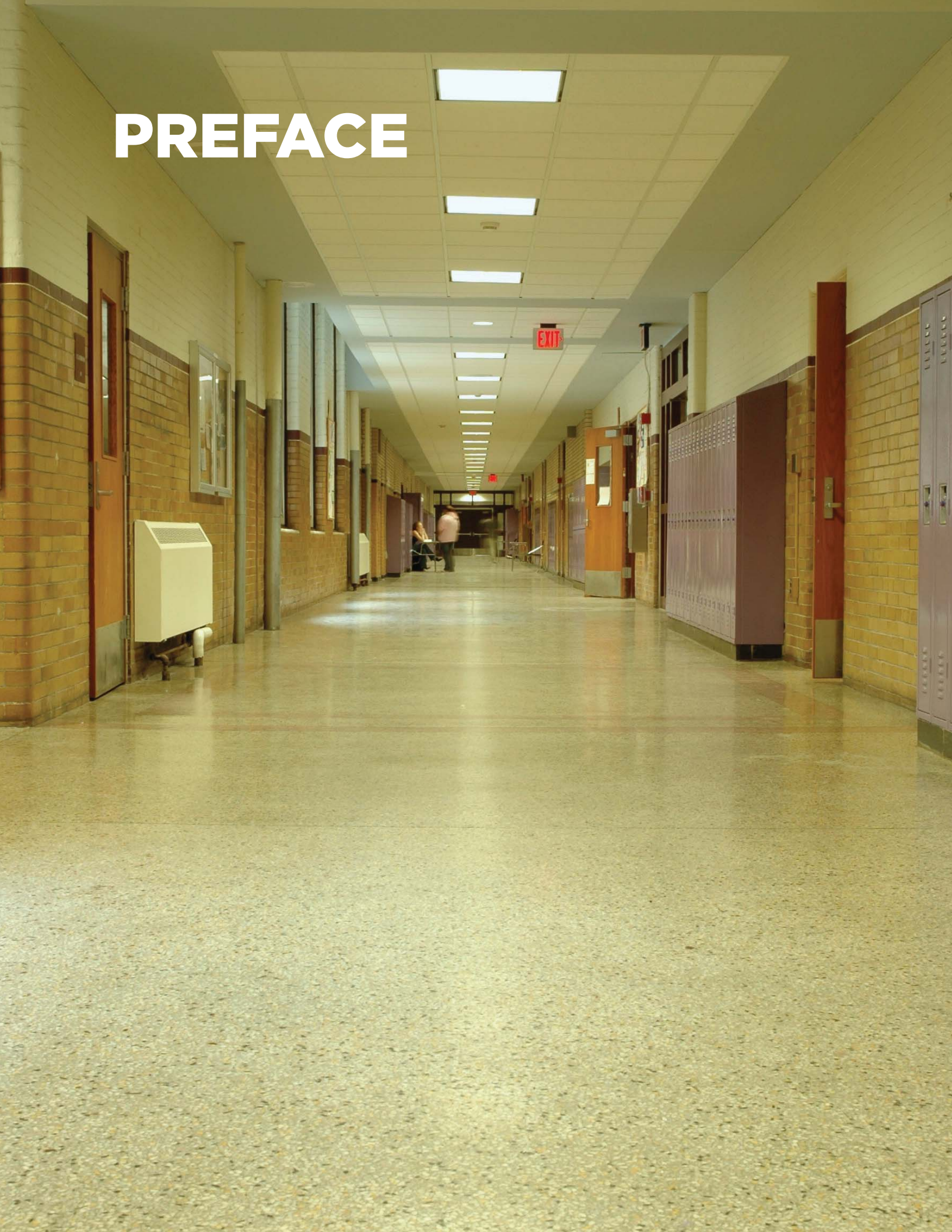
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PREFACE



This past spring, I got a vivid glimpse of how fundamentally GLSEN's long-standing research program has affected the national consciousness. While watching Anderson Cooper and Dr. Phil discuss the murder of eighth-grader Larry King, I suddenly heard Dr. Phil say: "Look, I don't want to throw a bunch of stats out here, but I do want people to understand the gravity of what we're talking about. Eighty-six percent of these teens say they are harassed on a daily basis, verbally. Half of them, 44 percent, say they're physically harassed during the day." It suddenly occurred to me that those were GLSEN statistics Dr. Phil was citing. Well, if Dr. Phil is going to throw a bunch of GLSEN stats out there to help people understand the urgency of these issues, that's certainly fine by me!

With the release of this 2009 National School Climate Survey, we mark ten years of research on these issues. In 1999, GLSEN began data collection on the school experiences of LGBT students, in order to fill a critical void in our knowledge and understanding of the ways LGBT issues played out in schools. Since that first survey, GLSEN has conducted our National School Climate Survey biennially, this being our sixth installment of the report. Over the past decade, this work has changed the advocacy landscape, transformed public understanding, and guided the development of targeted and effective programming at GLSEN and in school districts across the country.

Today, GLSEN is home to a pioneering and robust research effort, designed to examine the intersection of LGBT issues and K–12 education; measure the scope and impact of anti-LGBT bias and behavior in schools, including effects on individual well-being and academic achievement; and identify those interventions that make a difference in the lives of young people and contribute to better-functioning schools. GLSEN's commitment to a deep understanding of the issues, of current conditions in schools, and of the outcome of policy and programmatic interventions allows us to establish best practices for creating safe and affirming schools and understand our impact on the ground.

GLSEN's research has helped to transform public perceptions of our issues and fueled countless advocacy efforts directed at improving school climate. Since the beginning, we have sought to make the National School Climate Survey as accessible and widely available as possible and have maintained a commitment to providing information about LGBT issues in education that can be used by the broad range of our constituents — from students to educators to policy makers. The proliferation of this information has moved public opinion and has increased support for actions that can prevent damage to young lives.

Next time you hear a television report refer to rates of bullying and harassment of LGBT students; next time an article raises the issue of higher rates of absenteeism and lower grades among young people facing this harassment; or next time you hear about the school-wide benefits of having a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA); know that you are hearing findings generated by ten years of GLSEN's National School Climate Survey and the voices of the young people whose experiences we seek to understand and improve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eliza Byard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eliza" and last name "Byard" clearly distinguishable.

Eliza Byard, Ph.D.
Executive Director
GLSEN

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The authors also wish to thank the youth who participated in our survey for enlightening us about their experiences in school. We also wish to acknowledge the LGBT youth services and programs that had their constituents participate in the survey, as well as those organizations that assisted with disseminating information about the online version of the survey. We are grateful to Sam Klugman, former Research Assistant, for his assistance in survey design and data collection, and GLSEN's Communications Department for their help with proofreading and for their input on the report's graphic design and layout.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



For 20 years, GLSEN has worked to ensure safe schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For 10 of those years, GLSEN has been documenting the school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth: the prevalence of anti-LGBT language and victimization, the effect that these experiences have on LGBT students' achievement, and the utility of interventions to both lessen the negative effects of a hostile climate and promote a positive educational experience. In 1999, GLSEN identified the need for national data on the experiences of LGBT students and launched the first National School Climate Survey (NSCS). At the time, the school experiences of LGBT youth were under-documented and nearly absent from national studies on adolescents. The NSCS remains one of the few studies to examine the school experiences of LGBT students nationally and is the only national study to include transgender students. The results of the survey have been vital to GLSEN's understanding of the issues that LGBT students face, thereby informing our ongoing work to ensure safe and affirming schools for all.

In our 2009 survey, we examine the experiences of LGBT students with regard to indicators of negative school climate:

- hearing biased remarks, including homophobic remarks, in school;
- feeling unsafe in school because of personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation, gender expression, or race/ethnicity;
- missing classes or days of school because of safety reasons; and
- experiences of harassment and assault in school.

We also examine the possible negative effects of a hostile school climate on LGBT students' academic achievement, educational aspirations, and psychological well-being. We explore the diverse nature of LGBT students' experiences by reporting on how these differ by students' personal and community characteristics. We also examine whether or not students report experiences of victimization to school officials or to family members and how these adults address the problem. In addition, we demonstrate the degree to which LGBT students have access to supportive resources in school, and we explore the possible benefits of these resources, including Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), school harassment/assault policies, supportive school staff, and curriculum that is inclusive of LGBT-related topics.

Given that we now have 10 years of data, we examine changes over the past decade on both indicators of negative school climate and levels of access to LGBT-related resources in schools.

METHODS

GLSEN used two methods to locate survey participants in an effort to obtain a representative national sample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth: outreach through community-based groups serving LGBT youth and outreach via the Internet. With our first method, we randomly selected 50 community-based groups from a list of over 300 groups nationwide and asked their youth participants to complete a paper version of the survey. Our second method utilized GLSEN's web presence, e-communications, and online advertising to obtain participants. We posted notices of the survey on LGBT-youth oriented listservs and websites and emailed notices to GLSEN chapters and youth advocacy organizations. To ensure representation of transgender youth, youth of color, and youth in rural communities, we made special efforts to reach out to organizations that serve these populations. We also conducted targeted advertising on the MySpace and Facebook social networking sites. The advertisements targeted users between 13 and 18 years of age who gave some indication on their profile that they were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

The sample consisted of a total of 7,261 students between the ages of 13 and 21. Students were from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and from 2,783 unique school districts. About two-thirds of the sample (67.4%) was White, over half (57.1%) was female, and over half identified as gay or lesbian (61.0%). Students were in grades 6 to 12, with the largest numbers in grades 11 and 12.

KEY FINDINGS

Problem: Hostile School Climate

Schools nationwide are hostile environments for a distressing number of LGBT students — almost all of whom commonly hear homophobic remarks and face verbal and physical harassment and even physical assault because of their sexual orientation or gender expression.

- 88.9% of students heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) frequently or often at school, and 86.5% reported that they felt distressed to some degree by this.
- 72.4% heard other homophobic remarks (e.g., “dyke” or “faggot”) frequently or often at school.
- 62.6% heard negative remarks about gender expression (not acting “masculine enough” or “feminine enough”) frequently or often at school.
- 61.1% felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and 39.9% because of how they expressed their gender.
- 84.6% were verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) at school because of their sexual orientation and 63.7% because of their gender expression.
- 40.1% were physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation and 27.2% because of their gender expression.
- 18.8% were physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation and 12.5% because of their gender expression.
- 52.9% of LGBT students were harassed or threatened by their peers via electronic mediums (e.g., text messages, emails, instant messages or postings on Internet sites such as Facebook), often known as cyberbullying.

This high incidence of harassment and assault is exacerbated by school staff rarely, if ever, intervening on behalf of LGBT students.

- 62.4% of students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, believing little to no action would be taken or the situation could become worse if reported.
- 33.8% of the students who did report an incident said that school staff did nothing in response.

Problem: Absenteeism

Many LGBT students feel forced to miss classes or entire days of school rather than face a hostile environment where they experience continual harassment. School-based victimization denies these students their right to an education.

- 29.1% of students skipped a class at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

- 30.0% missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Students were 3+ times likelier to have missed classes (29.1% vs. 8.0%) and 4+ times likelier to have missed at least one day of school (30.0% vs. 6.7%) in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, when compared to the general population of secondary school students.
- Students were 3 times as likely to have missed school in the past month if they had experienced high levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation (57.7% vs. 18.0%) or gender expression (54.3% vs. 19.9%).

Problem: Lowered Educational Aspirations and Academic Achievement

Students cannot succeed in school when they do not feel safe. The incidence of in-school victimization experienced by LGBT students hinders their academic success and educational aspirations.

- LGBT students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression had grade point averages almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.7 vs. 3.1).
- LGBT students were more likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any type of post-secondary education (obtaining a high school diploma only or not finishing high school) than a national sample of students (9.9% vs. 6.6%).
- Students who experienced high levels of in-school victimization because of their sexual orientation or gender expression were more likely than other students to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (college, vocational-technical or trade school): about 14% of students who experienced high levels of victimization because of their gender expression or their sexual orientation did not plan to continue their education, compared to about 9% of those who had experienced low levels of victimization.

Problem: Poorer Psychological Well-Being

In-school experiences of harassment and assault were related to poorer psychological well-being. LGBT students who experienced high levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation or gender expression had higher levels of depression and anxiety than those who reported lower levels of those types of victimization. High levels of victimization were also related to lower levels of self-esteem.

Solution: Gay-Straight Alliances

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) can provide safe, affirming spaces and critical support for LGBT students and also contribute to creating a more welcoming school environment.

- Students in schools with a GSA heard fewer homophobic remarks, such as “faggot” or “dyke,” and fewer expressions where “gay” was used in a negative way than students in schools without GSAs.
- Students with a GSA in their school were more likely to report that school personnel intervened when hearing homophobic remarks compared to students without a GSA — 19.0% vs. 12.3% said that staff intervened “most of the time” or “always” when hearing homophobic remarks.
- Students with a GSA were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation than those without a GSA (54.3% vs. 66.5%).

- Students in schools with a GSA experienced less victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression. For example, 24.2% of students with a GSA experienced high levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation compared to 34.7% of those without a GSA.
- Students with a GSA had a greater sense of connectedness to their school community than students without a GSA.

Yet, less than half (44.6%) of students said that their school had a GSA or similar student club.

Solution: Inclusive Curriculum

Curriculum that includes positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events helps promote respect for all and can improve an individual LGBT student's school experiences and increase their sense of school connectedness.

- Students in schools with an inclusive curriculum heard fewer homophobic remarks, including negative use of the word “gay,” the phrase “no homo,” and homophobic epithets (e.g., “fag” or “dyke”), and negative comments about someone’s gender expression than those without an inclusive curriculum.
- Less than half (42.1%) of students in schools with inclusive curriculum felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, compared to almost two-thirds (63.6%) of students in schools without.
- Less than a fifth (17.1%) of LGBT students with inclusive curriculum had missed school in the past month compared to almost a third (31.6%) of other students.
- Students in schools with inclusive curriculum were more likely to report that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBT people than students in schools without (61.2% vs. 37.3%).
- Students in schools with an inclusive curriculum had a greater sense of connectedness to their school community than other students.

However, only a small percentage of students were taught positive representations about LGBT people, history, or events in their schools (13.4%).

Solution: Supportive Educators

The presence of supportive educators can have a significant positive impact on LGBT students’ academic achievement, as well as on their psychological well-being and longer-term educational aspirations.

- About half (51.5%) of students who had many (six or more) supportive staff at their school felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, compared to nearly three-fourths (73.7%) of those with no supportive staff.
- Less than a quarter (21.6%) of students with many supportive staff had missed school in the past month compared to nearly half (48.9%) with no supportive staff.
- Students with greater numbers of supportive staff had a greater sense of being a part of their school community than other students.
- Students with many supportive staff reported higher grade point averages than other students (3.1 vs. 2.7).

- A greater number of educators supportive of students was also associated with higher educational aspirations — students with many supportive educators were half as likely to say they were not planning on attending college compared to students with no supportive educators (8.0% vs. 19.5%).

Although almost all students (94.5%) could identify at least one school staff member supportive of LGBT students at their school, only about half (53.4%) could identify six or more supportive school staff.

Solution: Comprehensive Bullying/Harassment Policies and Laws

Policies and laws that explicitly address bias-based bullying and harassment can create safer learning environments for all students by reducing the prevalence of bias behaviors and encouraging staff intervention. Comprehensive policies and laws that specifically enumerate personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, among others, are the most effective at combating anti-LGBT bullying and harassment.

- About two-thirds (65.7%) of students in schools with comprehensive policies heard homophobic remarks (e.g., “faggot” or “dyke”) often or frequently, compared to almost three-quarters of students in schools with generic, non-enumerated policies (73.7%) or no policy whatsoever (74.1%).
- Students in schools with comprehensive policies were more likely than students in schools with a generic policy or no policy to report that staff intervened when homophobic remarks (26.6% vs. 15.9% vs. 10.0%) or negative remarks about gender expression (17.3% vs. 13.3% vs. 8.9%) were made.

However, only 18.2% of all LGBT students in our study reported that their school had a comprehensive policy that specifically mentioned sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.

Results from the NSCS provide evidence that students who live in states with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment laws compared to students in other states experience less victimization because of their sexual orientation and were more likely to have supportive resources, including a comprehensive school policy. Yet, only 15 states plus the District of Columbia have comprehensive laws that include sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.

School Climate Over Time: 1999–2009

Since 1999, when GLSEN first conducted the National School Climate Survey, the NSCS remains the only study that has consistently documented the school experiences of LGBT students nationally. We examine changes over time from 1999 to 2009 on both indicators of a hostile school climate, such as hearing homophobic remarks and experiences of harassment and assault, and on the availability of supportive resources for LGBT students in their schools.

Since 1999, there has been a decreasing trend in the frequency of hearing homophobic epithets; however, LGBT students’ experiences with more severe forms of bullying and harassment have remained relatively constant.

Homophobic Remarks. There was a steady decline in the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks from 1999 to 2003: two-thirds of students in 1999 and more than half of students in 2001 reported hearing these remarks frequently in their schools, in contrast to less than half in 2003, 2005, and 2007. In recent years, between 2005 and 2009, students’ reports of hearing these types of remarks have not decreased significantly. Using the word “gay” in a negative way has remained the most common form of biased language heard in schools by LGBT students.

School-Based Harassment and Assault. LGBT students’ experiences of harassment and assault have remained relatively constant over time. For example, reports of frequent verbal harassment based on

sexual orientation have hovered around 25%. However, there were small but significant decreases in frequencies of verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault from 2007 to 2009.

While the data on school-based harassment and assault have remained fairly constant over the last 10 years, there were significant increases in the availability of LGBT-related resources and supports.

Gay-Straight Alliances. After a tremendous increase in the percentage of students who had a GSA in their school from 2001 to 2003, there was a downward trend from 2003 to 2007. However, comparisons from 2007 to 2009 show a significant increase in the number of students with a GSA.

Supportive Educators. There were also significant increases in the number of school staff who were supportive of LGBT students. A significant increase from 2001 to 2003 was followed by little change from 2003 to 2007. However, in 2009, the average number of supportive staff was higher than in all previous years.

Curricular Resources. Overall, the percentage of students with access to LGBT-related information in school has not changed dramatically since we began asking about it in 2001. The one exception is the percentage of students who had LGBT-related resources in their school library, which has continually increased over time, reaching the highest levels in 2009.

School Harassment/Assault Policies. The percentage of students who reported having any type of school harassment/assault policy in their school has fluctuated since 2003, though there was no change between 2007 and 2009. There have been no substantive changes since 2005 regarding comprehensive policies that include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression — only about 20% of students from 2005 onward reported having such a policy in their school.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that there is an urgent need for action to create safe and affirming schools for LGBT students. Results from the 2009 National School Climate Survey demonstrate the ways in which school-based supports, such as supportive staff, school harassment/assault policies, and GSAs can positively affect LGBT students' school experiences. Furthermore, results show how comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment state laws can positively affect school climate for these students. Therefore, we recommend the following measures:

- Advocate for comprehensive bullying/harassment legislation at the state and federal levels that specifically enumerates sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories alongside others such as race, religion, and disability;
- Adopt and implement comprehensive bullying/harassment policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in individual schools and districts, with clear and effective systems for reporting and addressing incidents that students experience;
- Support student clubs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances, that provide support for LGBT students and address LGBT issues in education;
- Provide training for school staff to improve rates of intervention and increase the number of supportive teachers and other staff available to students; and
- Increase student access to appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBT people, history, and events through inclusive curriculum and library and Internet resources.

Taken together, such measures can move us towards a future in which all students will have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODS



Lawrence
King

deserved a safe
school, +

Candlelight vigil held during GLSEN's 2009 Safe Schools Advocacy Summit in Washington, D.C. for Lawrence King. King was a junior high student who was allegedly killed by a classmate because of his sexual orientation and gender expression.

Introduction



For 20 years, GLSEN has worked to ensure safe schools for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For 10 of those years, GLSEN has been documenting the school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth: the prevalence of anti-LGBT language and victimization, the effect that these experiences have on LGBT students' academic achievement, and the utility of interventions to both lessen the negative effects of a hostile climate and promote a positive educational experience. In 1999, GLSEN identified the need for national data on the experiences of LGBT students and launched its first National School Climate Survey (NSCS), which has been conducted biennially since that time. The results of the survey have been vital to GLSEN's understanding of the issues that LGBT students face, thereby informing our ongoing work to ensure safe and affirming schools for all. The 2009 NSCS marks our sixth report and 10 years of data on school climate for LGBT youth in the United States.

The landscape for LGBT students has changed enormously in the past decade. In 1999 there were fewer than 1,000 Gay-Straight Alliance clubs across the country compared to over 4,000 in 2009. In 1999, only five states and the District of Columbia had bullying/harassment or anti-discrimination laws that included protections for students based on sexual orientation compared to 15 states plus the District in 2009, and one state had protections based on gender identity or gender expression compared to 12 states in 2009. Furthermore, there was little information available on the experiences of LGBT students in the social science literature, such as psychology and human development. By 1999, there had been little published about the experiences of LGBT youth in general and only a few studies had specifically examined their experiences in school. Most of the empirical literature on LGBT youth in the context of schools consisted of studies from small convenience samples. However, these studies were valuable in that they provided the first evidence of hostile school experiences for this population. For example, one of the earliest studies examining the school experiences of LGBT youth, based on results from 36 LGBT youth in the South, found that 97% reported problems with classmates and half feared harassment from their peers.¹ In the 1990's, several states (e.g., Massachusetts, California) and localities

(e.g., Seattle, Chicago) added questions about the respondents' sexual orientation to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a biennial national survey of adolescent risk behaviors by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As the YRBS also includes questions about school-based victimization, data from these specific states and localities provided the first population-based information on LGBT students' experiences.² For example, one early study using data from the 1995 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Study found that LGBT students were five times more likely than their non-LGBT peers to have missed school because of fear (25.1% vs. 5.1%) and nearly five times more likely to have been threatened with a weapon at school (32.7% vs. 7.1%).³ At the time of GLSEN's inaugural NSCS, not only were there no national data on the experiences of LGBT youth, there was little information in general about their school experiences and an absence of information about the experiences of transgender students.

In 2009, GLSEN's National School Climate Survey remains one of the few studies to examine the school experiences of LGBT students nationally, and is the only national study to examine transgender student experiences. There continue to be certain states and localities that examine LGBT youth issues in the YRBS or similar state-wide youth health surveys. The Maryland YRBS, for example, found that 13% of Maryland youth were harassed or bullied during the past 12 months due to perceived sexual orientation.⁴ The 2007 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey found that nearly 60% of LGBT youth had been harassed — at a rate more than three times higher than other youth.⁵ Such state-level data is important for local advocacy regarding LGBT student issues. However, few states or localities have such data. Further, these surveys include questions about school-based victimization, but do not include questions that allow education leaders and researchers to examine what mechanisms help LGBT students to succeed in school, such as in-school resources and supports. In addition, these surveys do not include questions that allow researchers to examine school experiences that may be specific to transgender-identified youth.

In addition to these population-based studies, there have been other notable additions to the knowledge base on the experiences of LGBT students since our last NSCS report in 2007. The *Journal of LGBT Youth*, dedicated to improving

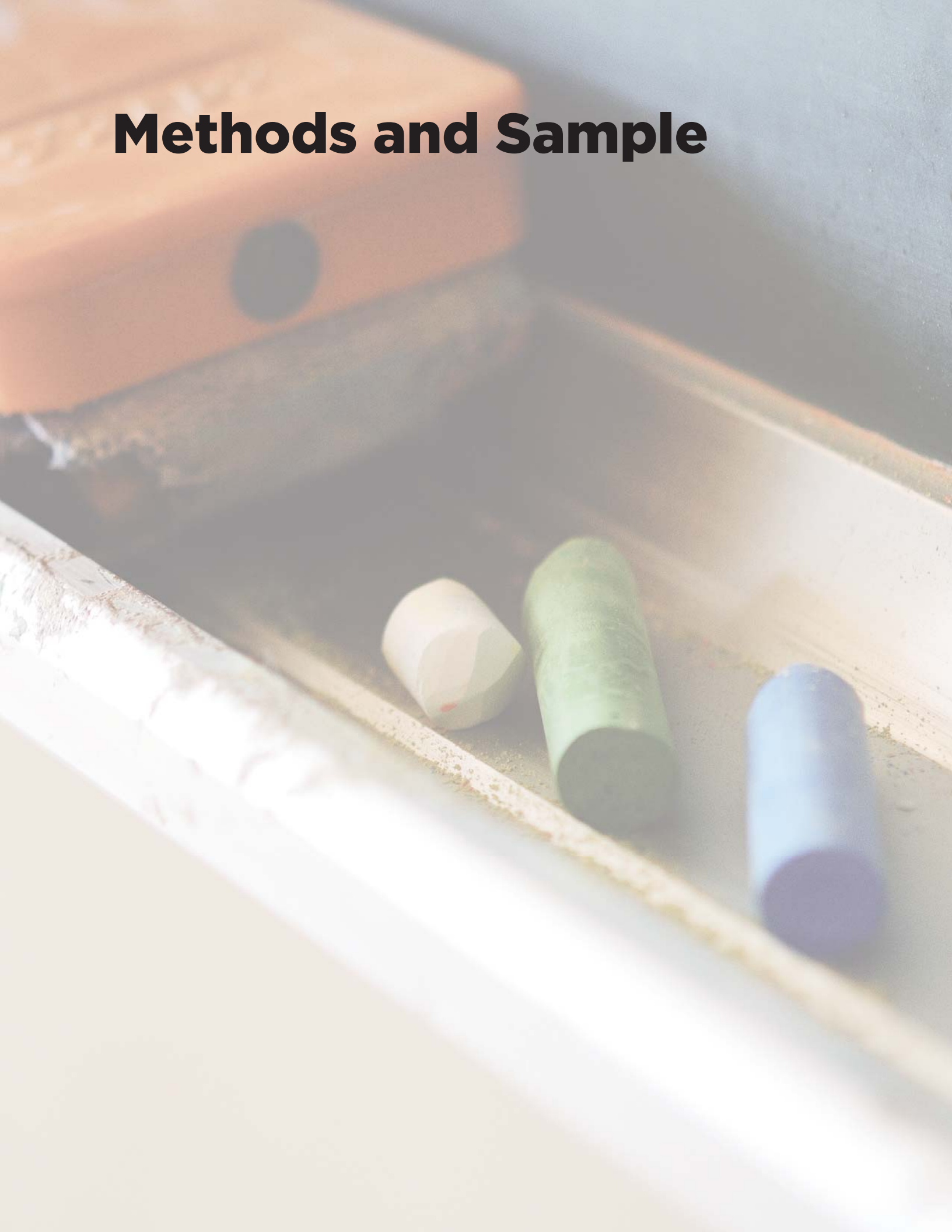
the quality of life for LGBT youth, has continued to include research specific to their educational experiences. There have also been two special journal issues devoted to research exploring the life experiences of LGBT youth. A 2008 issue of the *School Psychology Review*⁶ explored the relationships among sexual orientation, homophobia, and bullying for secondary school students, including contributions examining how parental support buffers the negative effects of in-school victimization⁷ and demonstrating how adolescent peers groups influence students' use of homophobic epithets.⁸ In 2009, the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*⁹ also devoted an issue to examining the ways in which LGBT youth thrive within varied social contexts and included contributions that examine the school context for this population, such as an article from Kosciw and colleagues that explored community and school characteristics and how these affected school climate.¹⁰

GLSEN's NSCS remains vital for our continued advocacy for safe and affirming school environments for LGBT students as there remains little information about LGBT student experiences on a national level. Furthermore, GLSEN's survey has continually expanded and adapted to better capture the picture of what is occurring in schools today. In 1999, the NSCS was a small survey with questions mostly about homophobic epithets and victimization. The survey has expanded over the years to include questions about gender expression and other types of homophobic remarks, such as "that's so gay" and "no homo." Understanding that LGBT youth may experience other forms of bias and victimization in school—not only because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression—we include questions about other forms of bias in school, such as that based on race/ethnicity, religion, and disability. In addition to documenting indicators of hostile school climate (e.g., frequency of biased remarks, experiences of harassment and assault, and feeling unsafe), the current NSCS examines the negative effects of a hostile school climate on LGBT students' educational outcomes and psychological well-being. We explore the diverse nature of LGBT students' experiences and report how these differ by students' personal and community characteristics. We also examine whether or not students report experiences of victimization to school officials or to family members and how these adults address the problem.

While it is important to document experiences of victimization in school and their negative impact on the lives of LGBT youth, the NSCS has also allowed us to understand what factors can lead to safer and healthier learning environments for LGBT students. The National School Climate Surveys include questions about the availability of resources and supports for students in their schools, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), curricular resources that are inclusive of LGBT issues, and supportive teachers or other school staff. Furthermore, we illustrate the utility of these resources, and how school-based resources and supports can improve the quality of school life for LGBT students.

Given that we now have 10 years of data from the NSCS, we examine changes over the past decade on both indicators of negative school climate and levels of access to LGBT-related resources in schools. As with all the past reports, we hope that the 2009 NSCS will provide useful information to advocates, educators, and policymakers that will enhance their efforts to create safe and affirming schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Methods and Sample



Youth were eligible to participate in the survey if they were at least 13 years of age, attended a K–12 school in the United States during the 2008–09 school year, and identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or a sexual orientation other than heterosexual (e.g., queer, questioning) or identified as transgender or as having a gender identity other than male, female, or transgender (e.g., genderqueer). In order to obtain a more representative sample of LGBT youth, we used two methods to locate possible participants. First, participants were obtained through community-based groups or service organizations serving LGBT youth. Fifty randomly selected groups/organizations agreed to participate in the survey and paper surveys were then sent for the youth to complete. The groups were randomly selected from a list of over 350 groups nationwide and 149 groups were contacted in order to obtain 50 that agreed to participate. Of these groups, 38 were able to have youth complete the survey and a total of 355 surveys were obtained through this method. Our second method was to make the National School Climate Survey available online through GLSEN's website. Notices about the survey were posted on LGBT-youth oriented listservs and websites. Notices were also emailed to GLSEN chapters and to youth advocacy organizations such as Youth Guardian Services and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition. To ensure representation of transgender youth, youth of color, and youth in rural communities, special outreach efforts were made to notify groups and organizations that work predominantly with these populations about the survey.

Even by using these two sampling methods, we may not have reached LGBT students who were not connected to LGBT communities in some way — students with no contact, direct or indirect, with a local community group or youth advocacy organizations would have been unlikely to learn about the survey. In order to broaden our reach to LGBT students who may not have had such connections, we conducted targeted advertising on the social networking sites MySpace and Facebook. On each site, notices about the survey were shown to users between 13 and 18 years of age who gave some indication on their profile that they were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. A total of 6,906 surveys were completed online. Online survey participants were asked how they heard about the survey — 1,185 reported MySpace, 2,683

reported Facebook and 3,038 reported another online source. Data collection occurred from April to August 2009.

The sample consisted of a total of 7,261 students between the ages of 13 and 21. Students were from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and from 2,783 unique school districts. Table 1 presents the sample's demographics and Table 2 shows the characteristics of the schools attended. About two-thirds of the sample (67.4%) was White, over half (57.1%) was female, and over half identified as gay or lesbian (61.0%). Students were in the 6th to 12th grades, with the largest numbers in 11th and 12th.

Table 1. Characteristics of Survey Participants

| Race and Ethnicity* | | | Gender** | | |
|---|-------|--------|----------------------------------|-------|--------|
| White or European American | 67.4% | n=4737 | Female | 57.1% | n=4075 |
| Hispanic or Latino, any race | 14.1% | n=991 | Male | 33.2% | n=2369 |
| African American or Black | 4.0% | n=279 | Transgender | 5.7% | n=409 |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 2.6% | n=186 | Other Gender | 4.0% | n=289 |
| Middle Eastern or Arab American, any race | 1.0% | n=68 | (e.g., genderqueer, androgynous) | | |
| | | | Grade in School | | |
| Native American, American Indian or Alaska Native | 0.5% | n=37 | 6th | 0.1% | n=7 |
| Multi-Racial | 10.4% | n=732 | 7th | 2.1% | n=143 |
| | | | 8th | 6.2% | n=432 |
| | | | 9th | 15.3% | n=1062 |
| | | | 10th | 22.8% | n=1586 |
| | | | 11th | 27.0% | n=1876 |
| | | | 12th | 26.6% | n=1851 |
| Sexual Orientation | | | Average Age = 16.3 years | | |
| Gay or Lesbian | 61.0% | n=4384 | | | |
| Bisexual | 31.6% | n=2273 | | | |
| Other Sexual Orientation (e.g., pansexual, queer) | 4.5% | n=321 | | | |
| Questioning or Unsure | 3.0% | n=214 | | | |

* Participants who selected more than one category were coded as "Multi-Racial," with the exception of participants who selected "Hispanic or Latino" or "Middle Eastern or Arab American."

** "Female" includes participants who selected only female as their gender, and "Male" includes participants who selected only male. The category "Transgender" includes participants who selected transgender, male-to-female, or female-to-male as their gender, including those who selected more than one of these categories. Participants who selected both male and female were categorized as "Other Gender."

Table 2. Characteristics of Participants' Schools

| Grade Levels | | | School Type | | |
|---|-------|--------|--|-------|--------|
| K–12 School | 5.0% | n=358 | Public School | 90.3% | n=6451 |
| Elementary School | 0.1% | n=5 | Charter | 3.1% | n=201 |
| Lower School (elementary and middle grades) | 0.5% | n=39 | Magnet | 8.7% | n=558 |
| Middle School | 6.5% | n=468 | Religious-Affiliated School | 3.8% | n=275 |
| Upper School (middle and high grades) | 6.4% | n=463 | Other Independent or Private School | 5.9% | n=420 |
| High School | 81.6% | n=5897 | District-Level Poverty* | | |
| Community Type | | | Lower Poverty (0-50%) | 78.5% | n=5698 |
| Urban | 30.1% | n=1945 | Higher Poverty (51-100%) | 21.5% | n=1563 |
| Suburban | 45.0% | n=2911 | * Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics regarding the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. | | |
| Rural or Small Town | 24.9% | n=1613 | | | |
| Region | | | | | |
| Northeast | 25.3% | n=1817 | | | |
| South | 29.0% | n=2085 | | | |
| Midwest | 23.4% | n=1686 | | | |
| West | 22.3% | n=1605 | | | |

INDICATORS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE



**I Pledge To
Be An Ally**

Display for GLBT History Month and GLSEN's Ally Week, a week of action encouraging people to be allies against anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying, and harassment at school, Madison High School, Madison, NJ.

Exposure to Biased Language



Key Findings

- Nearly three-quarters of LGBT students heard homophobic or sexist remarks often or frequently at school.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 students heard the word “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently at school.
- Nearly two-thirds of students heard homophobic remarks from school personnel.
- Less than a fifth of students reported that school personnel frequently intervened when hearing homophobic remarks or negative remarks about gender expression.
- 4 out 10 students heard their peers at school make racist remarks often or frequently at school.
- Remarks about students not acting “masculine enough” were more common than remarks about students not acting “feminine enough.”

GLSEN strives to make schools safe and affirming for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race or ethnicity, or any other characteristic that may be the basis for harassment. Keeping classrooms and hallways free of homophobic, sexist, and other types of biased language is one aspect of creating a more positive school climate for students. The 2009 survey, like our previous surveys, asked students about the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks (such as “faggot” and “dyke”), racist remarks (such as “nigger” or “spic”), and sexist remarks (such as someone being called “bitch” in a negative way or talk about girls being inferior to boys) while at school. As in the 2003, 2005, and 2007 surveys, students were also asked about the frequency of hearing negative remarks about the way in which someone expressed their gender at school (such as comments about a female student not acting “feminine enough”). Students were also asked about the frequency of hearing biased remarks from school staff. In addition to asking about the frequency of hearing remarks, students were asked whether anyone intervened when hearing this type of language used in school.

Homophobic Remarks

Homophobic remarks were one of the most commonly heard types of biased language in school.¹¹ As shown in Figure 1, nearly three-quarters (72.4%) of students reported hearing

students make derogatory remarks, such as “dyke” or “faggot,” often or frequently in school. Almost half of students (41.7%) reported that most of their peers made these types of remarks (see Figure 2). Nearly two-thirds (60.4%) of students reported ever hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers or other school staff (see Figure 6).

We also asked students about the frequency of hearing the word “gay” used in a negative way in school, such as in the expression “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay.” Use of these expressions was even more prevalent than other homophobic remarks like “fag” or “dyke” — 88.9% of students heard “gay” used in a negative way often or frequently at school (see also Figure 1). These expressions are often used to mean that something or someone is stupid or worthless and, thus, may be dismissed as innocuous by school authorities and students in comparison to overtly derogatory remarks such as “faggot.” However, many LGBT students did not view these expressions as innocuous — 86.5% reported that hearing “gay” or “queer” used in a negative manner caused them to feel bothered or distressed to some degree (see Figure 3).

“No homo” is a relatively recent phrase and often employed at the end of a statement in order to rid it of a homosexual connotation. For instance, some might use the phrase after compliments, as in “I like your jeans — no homo.” This phrase propagates the notion that it is unacceptable to have a same-sex attraction. In the 2009 survey,

Figure 1. Frequency of Hearing Biased Language from Students

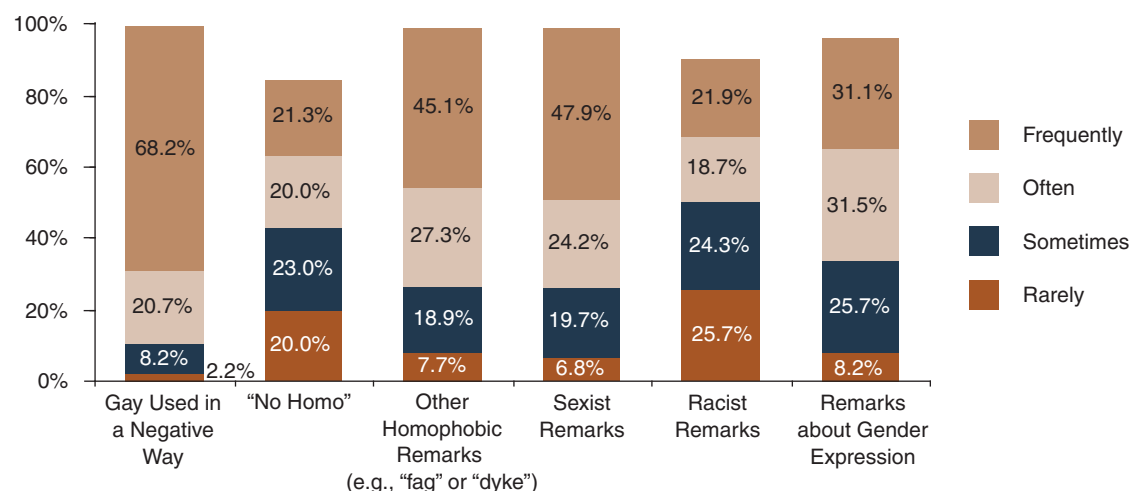


Figure 2. Prevalence of Other Students Making Biased Remarks

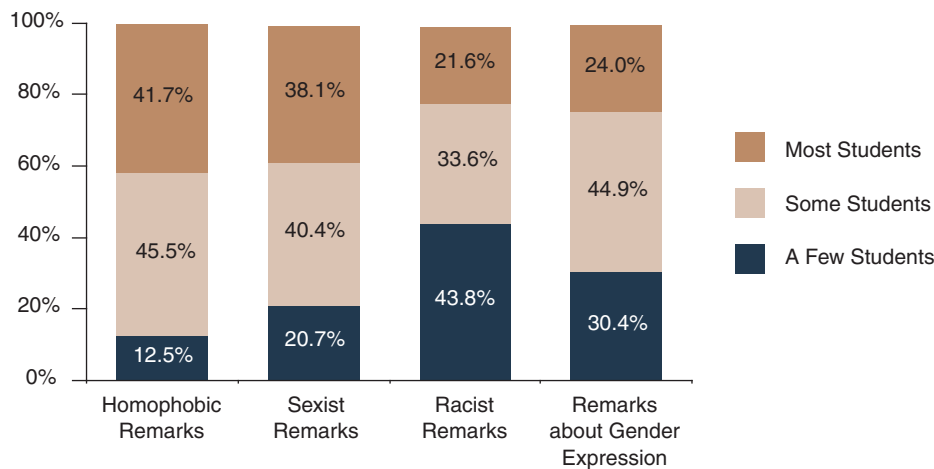


Figure 3. Degree that Students Were Bothered or Distressed as a Result of Hearing Words Like “Gay” or “Queer” Used in a Negative Way

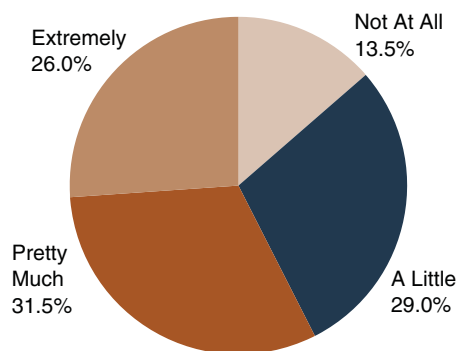
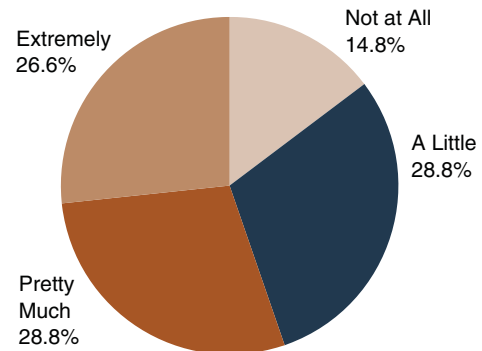


Figure 4. Degree that Students Were Bothered or Distressed as a Result of Hearing “No Homo”



we asked students about the frequency of hearing this expression in school. This expression was less common than other types of homophobic remarks — less than half (41.3%) of students heard “no homo” used often or frequently at school (see also Figure 2). As with the expression “that’s so gay,” some may believe that saying “no homo” is not meant to be offensive to LGBT people, yet over three-quarters (85.2%) of LGBT students reported that hearing “no homo” caused them to feel bothered or distressed to some degree.

Sexist Remarks

Sexist remarks, such as calling someone a “bitch” in a negative manner, comments about girls being inferior to boys, or comments about girls’ bodies were also commonly heard in school. Nearly three-quarters (72.1%) of students heard sexist remarks from other students frequently or often (see Figure 1). In addition, more than a third (38.1%) said they heard such comments from most of their peers (see Figure 2). Over half (60.5%) of students also reported that school personnel made sexist remarks while in school (see Figure 6).

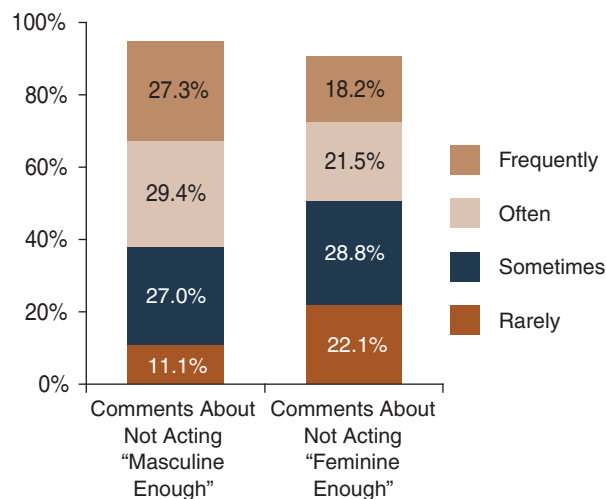
Racist Remarks

Hearing racist remarks, such as “spic” or “nigger,” in school was not uncommon. As shown in Figure 1, more than a third (40.6%) reported hearing racist remarks from other students often or frequently in school. Over one-fifth (21.6%) of students reported that these types of remarks were made by most of their peers (see Figure 2). In addition, almost a third (32.3%) of students reported hearing racist remarks from faculty or other school personnel while in school (see Figure 6).

Negative Remarks about Gender Expression

Our society upholds norms for what is considered an appropriate expression of one’s gender. Those who express themselves in a manner considered to be atypical may experience criticism, harassment, and sometimes violence. Findings from this survey demonstrate that negative remarks about someone’s gender expression were pervasive in schools. We asked students two separate questions about hearing comments related to a student’s gender expression — one question asked how often they heard remarks about someone not acting “masculine enough,” and another question asked how often they heard comments about someone not acting “feminine enough.” Overall, 62.6% of students reported hearing either type of remark about someone’s gender expression often or frequently at school

Figure 5. Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks About Students’ Gender Expression



(see Figure 1). Remarks about students not acting “masculine enough” were more common than remarks about students not acting “feminine enough.”¹² Over half of students (56.7%) had often or frequently heard negative comments about students’ “masculinity,” compared to more than a third (39.7%) who heard comments as often about students’ “femininity” (see Figure 5). Almost a quarter (24.0%) of students reported that most of their peers made negative remarks about someone’s gender expression (see Figure 2). Over half (59.0%) of students heard teachers or other staff make negative comments about a student’s gender expression at school (see Figure 6).

Intervention in Biased Remarks

Intervention by School Staff. In addition to the frequency of hearing biased language in school, students were asked how often such remarks were made in the presence of teachers or other school staff. Students in our survey reported that their peers were more likely to make homophobic remarks when school personnel were present than they were to make other types of biased remarks.¹³ As shown in Figure 7, more students said that school staff were present all or most of the time when homophobic remarks were made (39.6%) than when sexist remarks, racist remarks, or remarks about someone’s gender expression were made (31.2%, 24.3%, and 26.0%, respectively).

When school staff were present, the use of biased and derogatory language by students remained largely unchallenged. As shown in Figure 8, less than a fifth of the students reported that school personnel frequently intervened (“most of the time” or “always”) when homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression were made in their presence (15.3% and 12.1%, respectively). School staff were much more likely to intervene when students used sexist and racist language — 37.4% said that staff frequently intervened when hearing sexist language and 55.8% intervened as often when hearing racist remarks.¹⁴

Infrequent intervention by school authorities when hearing biased language in school may send a message to students that such language is tolerated. Furthermore, school staff may themselves be modeling poor behavior and legitimizing the use of homophobic language given that a majority of students reported hearing school staff make homophobic remarks. The fact

that so many students reported biased remarks being made in the presence of school personnel supports this point.

Intervention by Students. One would expect teachers and school staff to bear the responsibility for addressing problems of biased language in school. However, students may at times intervene when hearing biased language as well. The willingness of students to intervene may be another indicator of school climate. As shown in Figure 9, few students reported that their peers intervened always or most of the time when

hearing homophobic remarks (6.0%) or negative comments about someone's gender expression (7.3%). Although intervention by students when hearing racist or sexist remarks was not common, students were most likely to report that their peers intervened when hearing these types of remarks.¹⁵ Almost a quarter of students (23.3%) reported that other students intervened most of the time or always when hearing racist remarks, and about a fifth (19.2%) reported that their peers intervened as frequently when hearing sexist remarks.

Figure 6. Frequency of Hearing Biased Language from Teachers or Other School Staff

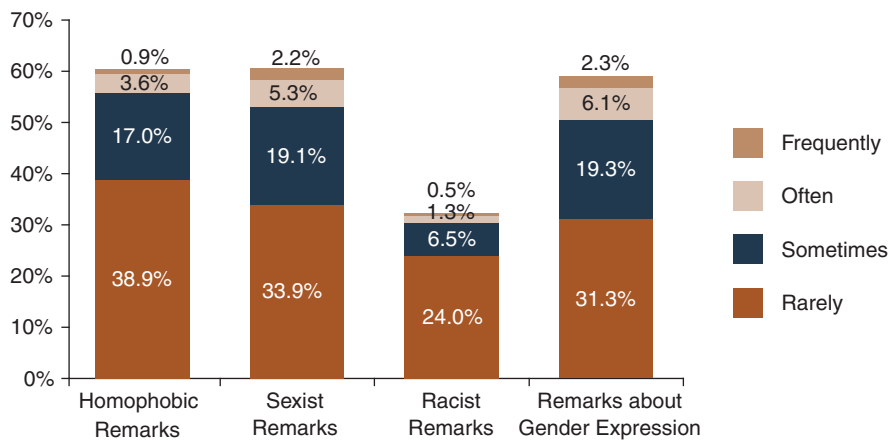


Figure 7. Presence of School Staff When Biased Remarks Were Made

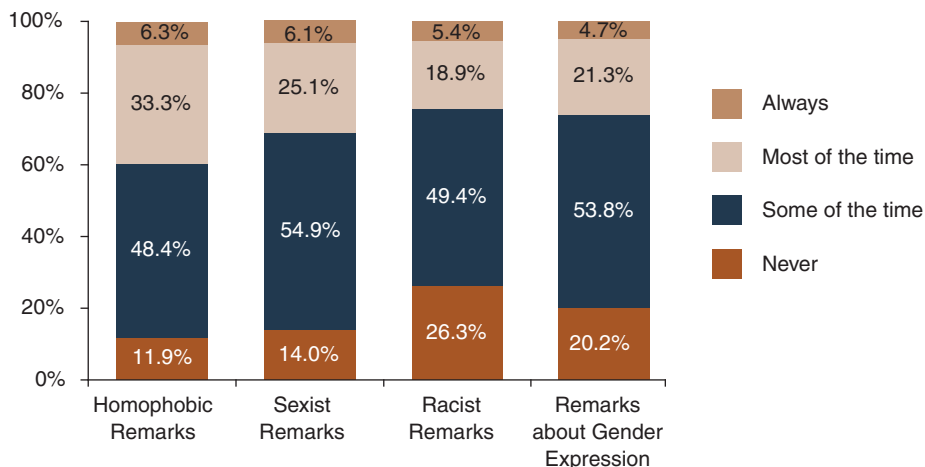


Figure 8. Frequency of Intervention by Teachers or Other School Staff When Biased Remarks Were Made

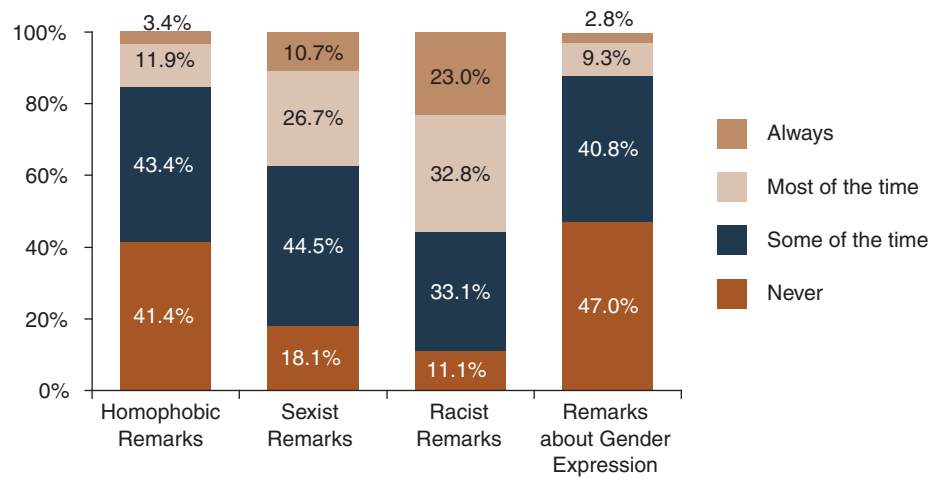
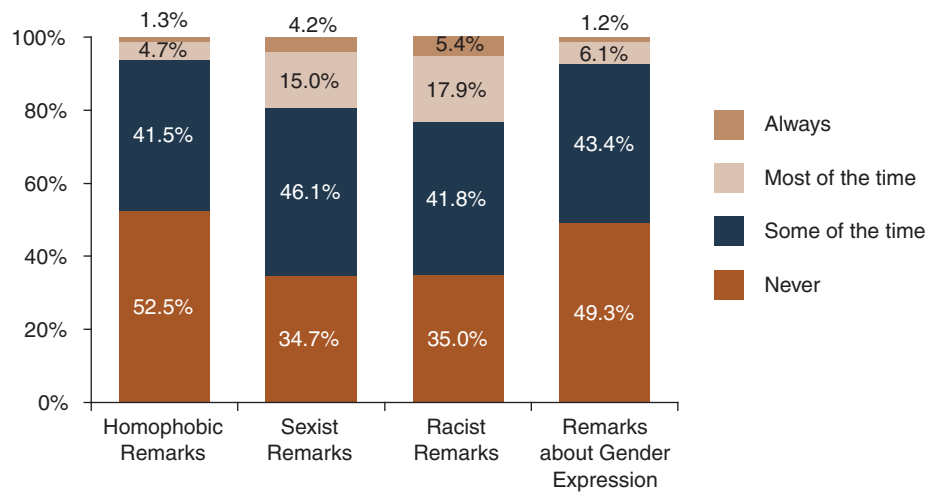
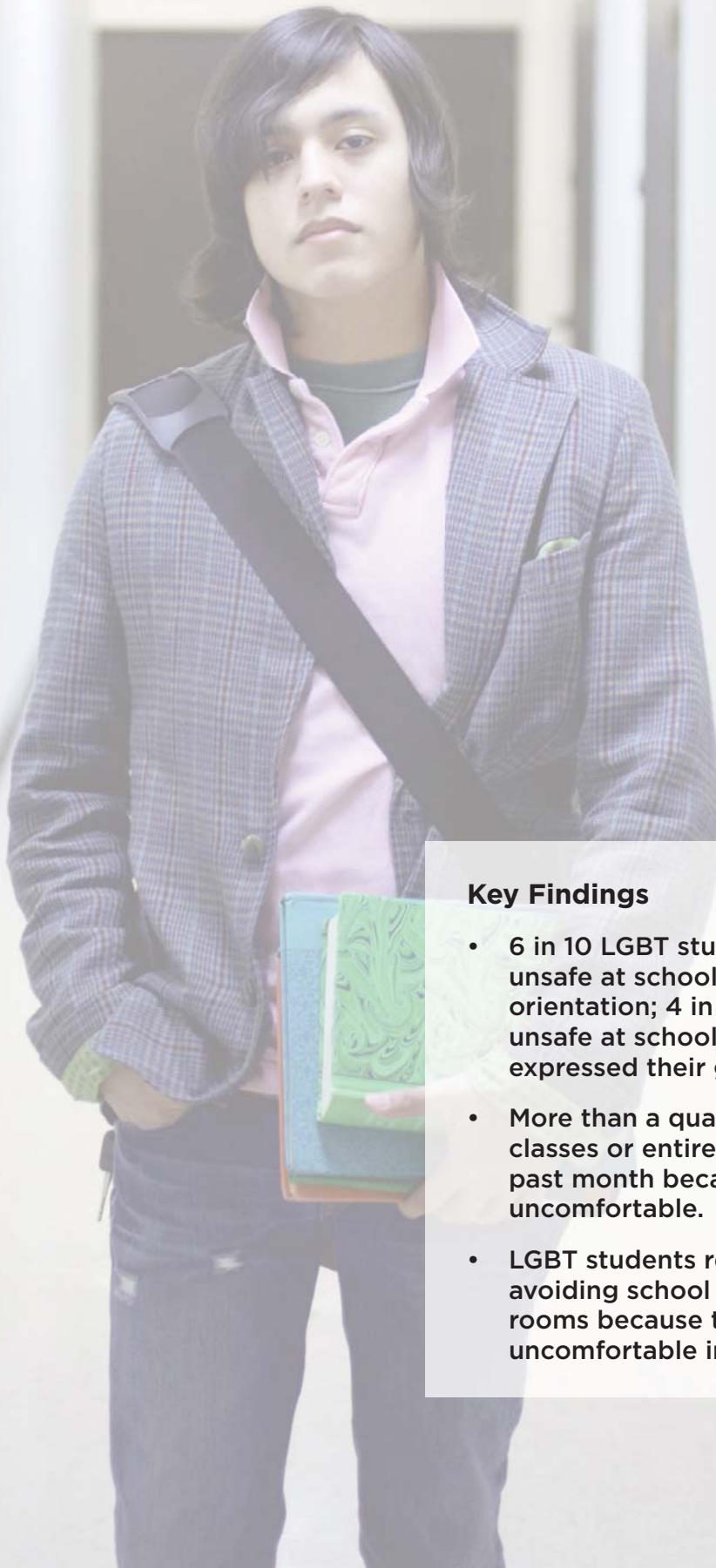


Figure 9. Frequency of Intervention by Students When Biased Remarks Were Made



School Safety



Key Findings

- 6 in 10 LGBT students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation; 4 in 10 reported feeling unsafe at school because of how they expressed their gender.
- More than a quarter of students missed classes or entire days of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.
- LGBT students reported most commonly avoiding school bathrooms and locker rooms because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable in those spaces.

Overall Safety at School

For LGBT youth, school can be an unsafe place for a variety of reasons. Students in our survey were asked whether they ever felt unsafe at school during the past year because of a number of personal characteristics: sexual orientation, gender, how they expressed their gender (i.e., how traditionally “masculine” or “feminine” they were in appearance or behavior), and actual or perceived race or ethnicity, disability, or religion. About two-thirds of LGBT students (68.2%) felt unsafe at school in the past year because of at least one of these personal characteristics. As shown in Figure 10, LGBT students most commonly felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and gender expression:

- 6 in 10 students (61.1%) reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation; and
- 4 in 10 students (39.9%) felt unsafe because of how they expressed their gender.

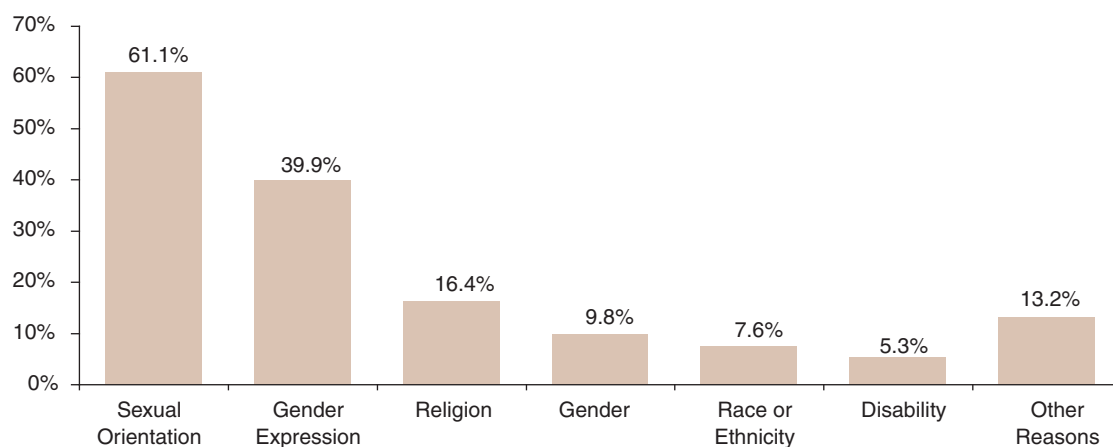
Almost a fifth (16.4%) of students reported feeling unsafe in school because of their religion, and students who identified their religion as something other than a Christian denomination (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Hindu) or who said they did not have a religion were more likely to feel unsafe at school for this reason.¹⁶ Sizable percentages of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe because of their

race/ethnicity (7.6%) or gender (9.8%; see also Figure 10). In addition, 5.3% of students felt unsafe at school in the past year because of an actual or perceived disability.

More than a tenth (13.2%) of survey participants reported feeling unsafe at school for other reasons not included in the listed characteristics. These students were provided an opportunity to describe why they felt unsafe; aspects of their physical appearance, such as body weight, was the largest other reason given (18.9% of those who felt unsafe for a reason not listed, or 2.5% of all students in the survey). Other responses included feeling unsafe because of mental health issues or because of gang-related violence at school.

In the 2009 NSCS, we also asked students if there were particular spaces at school that they avoided specifically because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. As shown in Figure 11, school locker rooms and bathrooms were most commonly avoided, with a little more than a third avoiding each of these spaces because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (35.7% and 34.1%, respectively). Almost a fifth of LGBT students said that they avoided the school cafeteria or lunchroom (18.6%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. In addition, hallways and areas outside of school buildings, such as parking lots or athletic fields, were identified as unsafe spaces by many LGBT students.

Figure 10. Percentage of Students Who Felt Unsafe at School Because of a Personal Characteristic



The survey also provided students an opportunity to indicate other spaces at school that they avoided due to concerns for safety or comfort; 5.3% reported that they felt unsafe or uncomfortable in other spaces. Among these respondents, nearly half mentioned specific classes (e.g., physical education) or classrooms as spaces that they avoided (48.2% of those who indicated a space not listed, or 2.6% of all survey participants). Other responses included avoiding spaces where certain groups of students frequented (e.g., “places where certain groups gather,” “places with homophobic students”).

Feeling unsafe or uncomfortable at school can negatively affect the ability of students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, to thrive and succeed academically, particularly if it results in avoiding classes or missing entire days of school. When asked about absenteeism, more than a quarter of LGBT students reported skipping a class at least once in the past month (29.1%) or missing at least one entire day of school in the past month (30.0%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figures 12 and 13).

Figure 11. Percentage of Students Who Avoided Spaces at School Because They Felt Unsafe or Uncomfortable

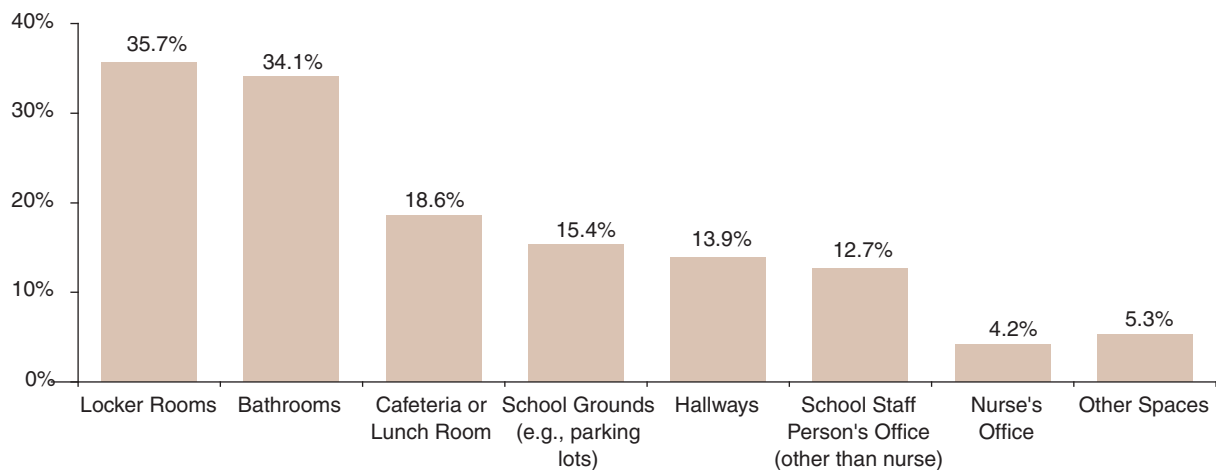


Figure 12. Frequency of Missing Classes in the Past Month Because of Feeling Unsafe or Uncomfortable

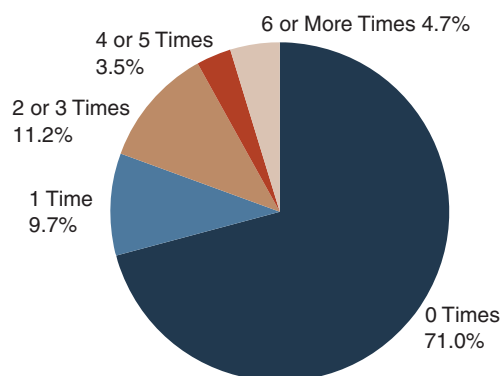
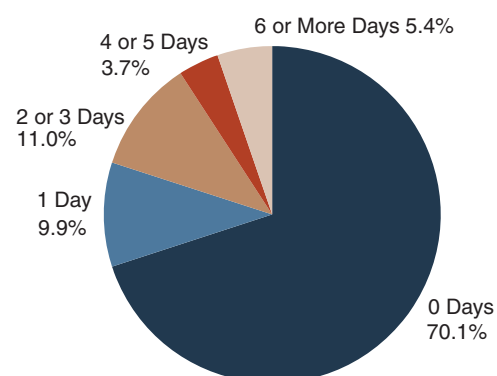


Figure 13. Frequency of Missing Days of School in the Past Month Because of Feeling Unsafe or Uncomfortable

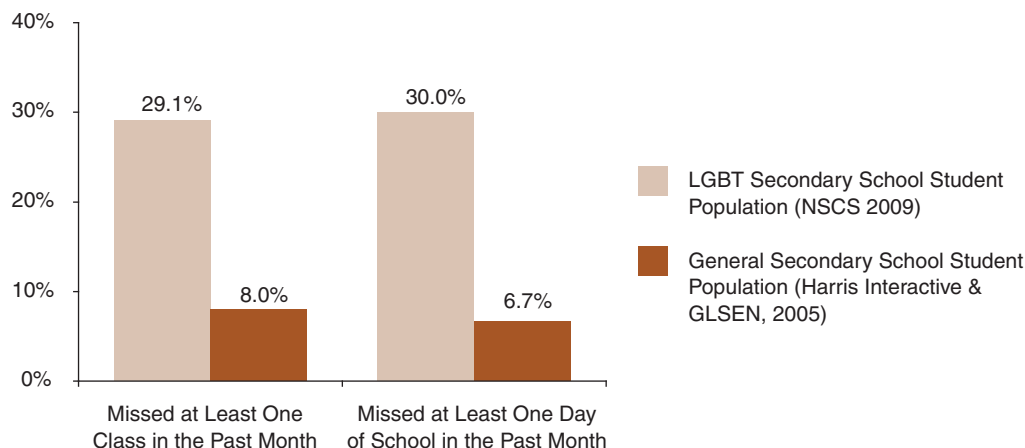


Comparisons with a Population-Based Study

In 2005, Harris Interactive and GLSEN conducted a national study with a population-based survey of U.S. middle and high school students. Throughout this current report, we compare some of the findings from the 2009 NSCS with the national sample of secondary school students from the Harris Interactive/GLSEN study in order to further examine the degree of school-based harassment and other experiences for LGBT students relative to their peers.¹⁷ Compared to the general population of secondary school students, LGBT students are more likely to experience school as an unsafe place:

- LGBT students were much more likely than the national sample of students to feel unsafe at school because of personal characteristics — almost 7 in 10 LGBT students (68.2%) reported that they felt unsafe in school because of at least one characteristic compared to about 2 in 10 students nationally (20.1%).¹⁸
- LGBT students were more than three times as likely to report missing class at least once or at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figure 14).¹⁹

Figure 14. LGBT Secondary School Student Population vs. General Secondary School Student Population: Missing Classes and Day of School for Safety Reasons



Experiences of Harassment and Assault at School

A photograph of a school hallway with rows of blue lockers on the left. A student with dark hair, wearing a white and blue striped shirt and dark pants, is sitting on the floor, leaning their head against the lockers and looking away from the camera with a distressed expression. The hallway is brightly lit with fluorescent lights, and a blue door is visible at the end of the hallway.

Key Findings

- Sexual orientation and gender expression were the most common reasons LGBT students were harassed or assaulted at school.
- Nearly 90% of students reported being verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) at school because of their sexual orientation; nearly two-thirds were verbally harassed because of their gender expression.
- 4 in 10 students reported being physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) at school because of their sexual orientation.
- Nearly 1 in 5 students reported being physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- Relational aggression (i.e., being deliberately excluded by peers or mean rumors being spread) was reported by the vast majority of students.
- More than half of the students reported experiencing some form of electronic harassment (“cyberbullying”) in the past year.

We asked survey participants how often (“never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”) they had been verbally harassed, physically harassed, or physically assaulted at school during the past year specifically because of a personal characteristic (sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, and actual or perceived race or ethnicity, disability, or religion).

Verbal Harassment

Students in our survey were asked how often in the past year they had been verbally harassed (e.g., being called names or threatened) at school specifically because of personal characteristics. An overwhelming majority (91.9%) reported being verbally harassed at some point in the past year, and 52.9% experienced high frequencies of verbal harassment (often or frequently). LGBT students most commonly reported experiencing verbal harassment at school because of their sexual orientation or how they expressed their gender (see Figure 15):²⁰

- 84.6% had been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, and 39.9% reported that it happened often or frequently.
- 63.7% had been verbally harassed because of their gender expression, and 25.6% reported that it happened often or frequently.

Although not as commonly reported, many LGBT students were harassed in school because of their gender — almost half (48.1%) had been verbally harassed in the past year for this reason and about

a tenth (10.1%) often or frequently. In addition, sizable percentages of LGBT students reported having been verbally harassed at school in the past year because of their actual or perceived religion (40.0%), race or ethnicity (32.9%), or disability (17.1%).

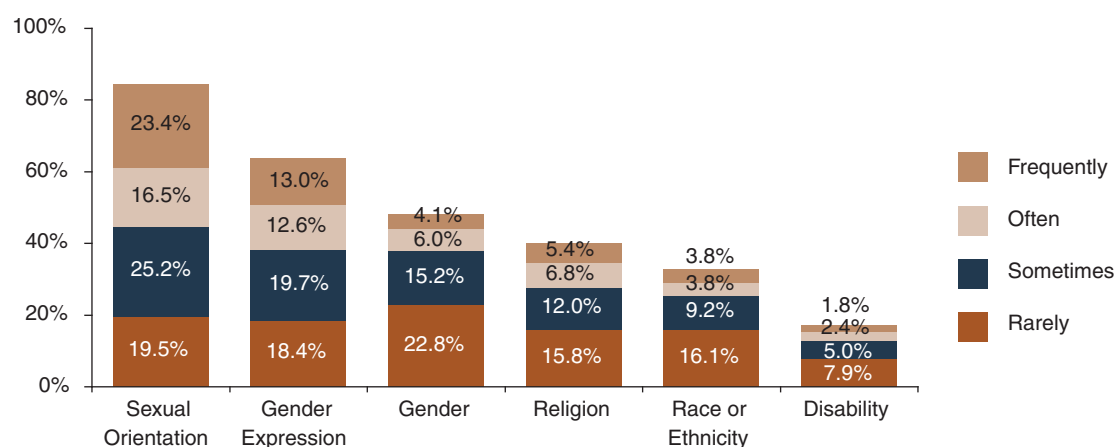
Physical Harassment

With regard to physical harassment, almost half (46.9%) of LGBT students were physically harassed (e.g., being shoved or pushed) at some point at school during the past year. Their experiences of physical harassment followed a pattern similar to verbal harassment — students most commonly reported being physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression (see Figure 16):²¹

- 40.1% of LGBT students had been physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation, and 12.9% reported that this harassment occurred often or frequently.
- 27.2% were physically harassed at school because of how they expressed their gender; almost a tenth (8.7%) often or frequently (see also Figure 16).

With regard to other personal characteristics, about a fifth (19.4%) were physically harassed because of their gender, a tenth because of their actual or perceived religion (11.4%) or race/ethnicity (9.2%), and 6.5% because of an actual or perceived disability (see also Figure 16).

Figure 15. Frequency of Verbal Harassment in the Past School Year



Physical Assault

LGBT students experienced physical assault (e.g., being punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) less frequently at school than the other forms of victimization. However, an alarming number of students were still assaulted at school — 21.3% of students in our survey had been assaulted at school during the past year, most commonly because of their sexual orientation or gender expression (see Figure 17):²²

- 18.8% of LGBT students were assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation,
- 12.5% were assaulted at school because of how they expressed their gender, and
- 7.8% were assaulted at school because of their gender.

Physical assault based on actual or perceived religion (5.2%), race/ethnicity (4.2%), or disability (3.3%) was less commonly reported.

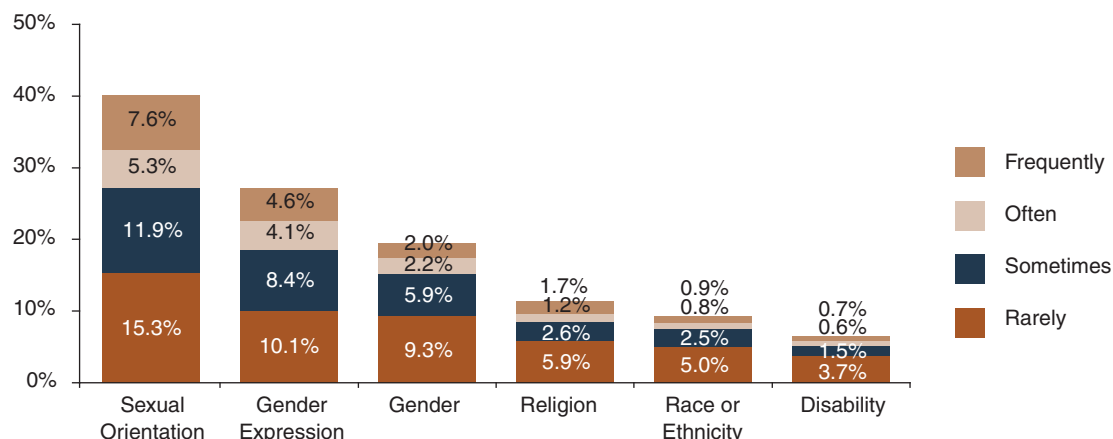
Experiences of Other Types of Harassment and Negative Events

LGBT students may be harassed or experience other negative events at school for reasons that are not clearly related to sexual orientation or another personal characteristic. In our survey, we asked students how often they experienced these other types of events, such as being sexually harassed or deliberately excluded by their peers, in the past year.

Sexual Harassment. Previous research has shown that the harassment experienced by LGBT students in school is often sexual in nature, particularly harassment experienced by lesbian and bisexual young women and by transgender youth.²³ Survey participants were asked how often they had been sexually harassed at school, such as unwanted touching or sexual remarks directed at them. As shown in Figure 18, a little more than two-thirds (68.2%) of LGBT students had been sexually harassed at school, and a fifth (20.8%) reported that such events occurred often or frequently.

Relational Aggression. Research on school-based bullying and harassment often focuses on physical or overt acts of aggressive behavior; however, it is also important to examine relational forms of aggression that can damage peer relationships, such as spreading rumors or excluding students from peer groups or activities. We asked participants how often they experienced two common forms of relational aggression in the past year: being purposefully excluded by peers and the target of mean rumors or lies. As shown in Figure 18, the vast majority (88.2%) of LGBT

Figure 16. Frequency of Physical Harassment in the Past School Year



students in our survey reported that they had felt deliberately excluded or “left out” by other students, and nearly half (46.0%) experienced this often or frequently. Most (84.0%) had mean rumors or lies told about them at school, and over a third (40.3%) experienced this often or frequently.

Property Theft or Damage at School. Having one’s personal property damaged or stolen is yet another dimension of a hostile school climate for students. Almost half (49.7%) of LGBT students reported that their property had been stolen or purposefully damaged by other students at school in the past year, and about tenth (11.2%) said that such events had occurred often or frequently (see Figure 18).

Electronic Harassment or “Cyberbullying.”

Electronic harassment (often called “cyberbullying”) is using an electronic medium, such as a mobile phone or Internet communications, to threaten or harm others. In recent years, there has been much attention given to this type of harassment as access to the Internet, mobile phones, and other electronic forms of communication has increased for many youth. When asked how often they were harassed or threatened by students at their school via electronic mediums (e.g., text messages, emails, instant messages, or postings on Internet sites such as Facebook), a little more than half (52.9%) of LGBT students reported experiencing this type of harassment in the past year. Almost a fifth (14.6%) had experienced it often or frequently (see Figure 18).

Figure 17. Frequency of Physical Assault in the Past School Year

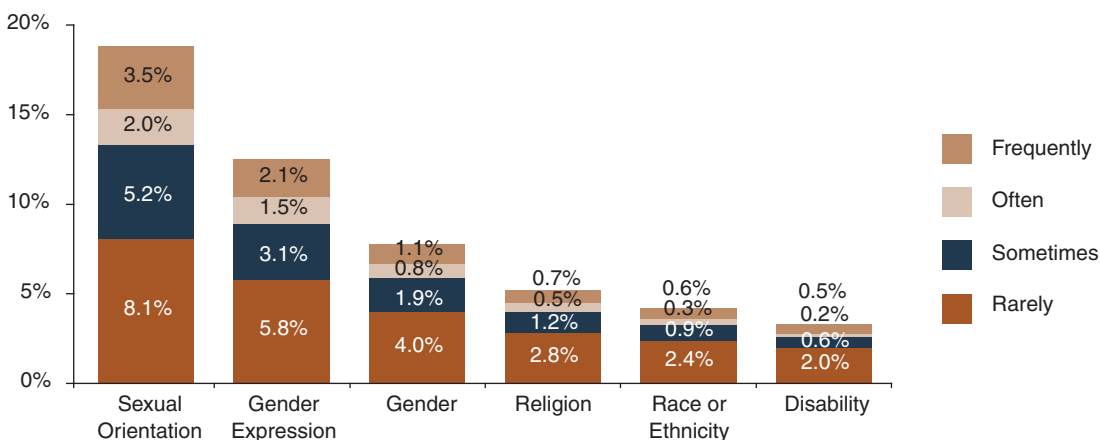
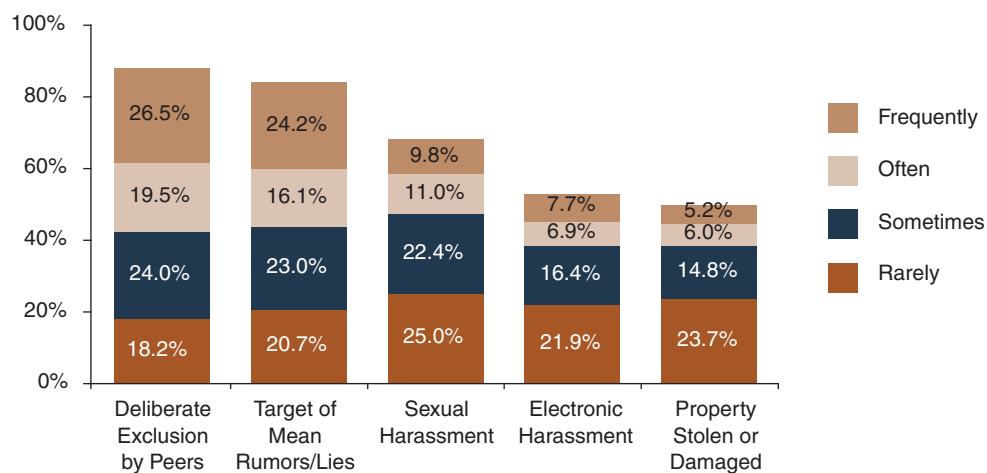


Figure 18. Frequency of Other Types of Harassment in School in the Past Year

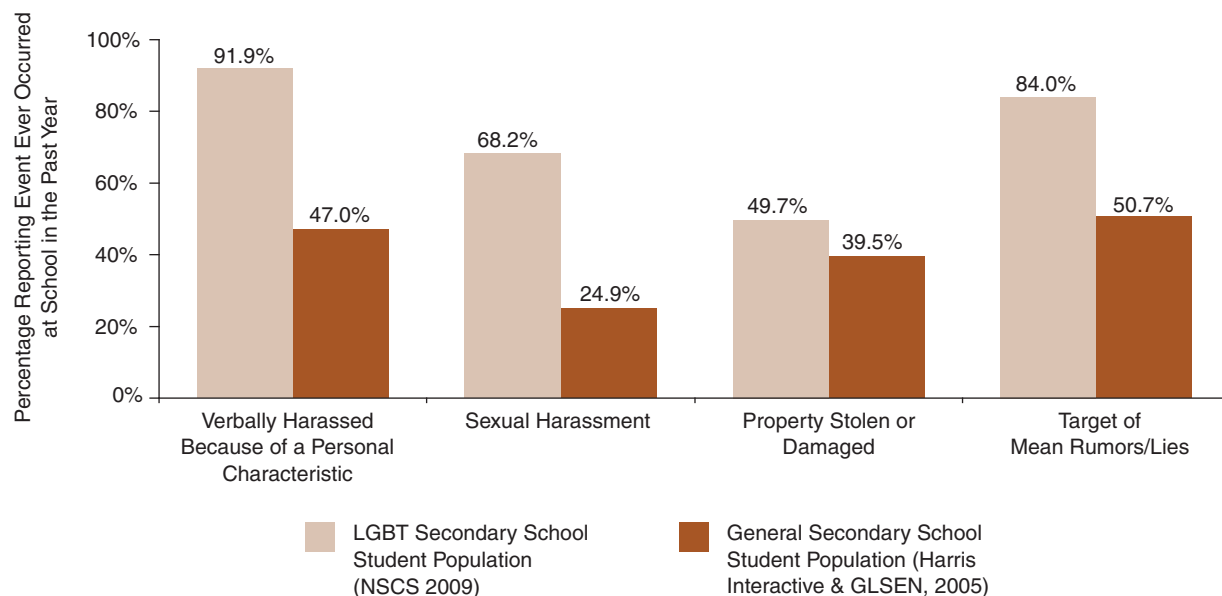


Comparisons to a Population-Based Study

In order to further gauge the general climate of schools for LGBT students, we compared findings regarding harassment and assault from this current survey to findings from the Harris Interactive/GLSEN national survey of a population-based sample of secondary school students. As shown in Figure 19, LGBT students in the current study were much more likely to have been verbally harassed at school in the past year because of a

personal characteristic than the general population of students — 91.9% versus 47.0%.²⁴ In addition, LGBT students in the NSCS were more likely to report being sexually harassed, having their property stolen or deliberately damaged at school, or having rumors or lies told about them at school than the general student population.²⁵ For example, LGBT students were more than twice as likely to report being sexually harassed at school than the general secondary school student population (see also Figure 19).

Figure 19. LGBT Secondary School Student Population vs. General Secondary School Student Population: Victimization Experiences at School



Reporting of School-Based Harassment and Assault



Key Findings

- The majority of LGBT students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to either school staff or a family member.
- Among students who did not report being harassed or assaulted to school staff, the most common reasons given for not reporting were doubts that staff would effectively address the situation or fears that reporting would make the situation worse in some way.
- Only about a third of students who reported incidents of victimization to school personnel said that staff effectively addressed the problem. In fact, when asked to describe how staff responded to reported incidents of victimization, students most commonly said that staff did nothing.

In the current survey, we asked those students who had experienced harassment or assault in the past school year how often they had reported the incidents to school staff or to a family member (i.e., to their parent or guardian or to another family member). As shown in Figure 20, the majority of these students never reported incidents to either school staff (62.4%) or to a family member (54.9%). In addition, few students indicated that they reported incidents of harassment or assault most of the time or always to staff (13.5%). Reporting incidents of harassment and assault to school staff may be an intimidating task for students. There is also no guarantee that reporting incidents to school personnel would result in effective intervention.

Given that family members may be able to advocate on behalf of the student with school personnel, we asked those students who had

Figure 20. Frequency of Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault

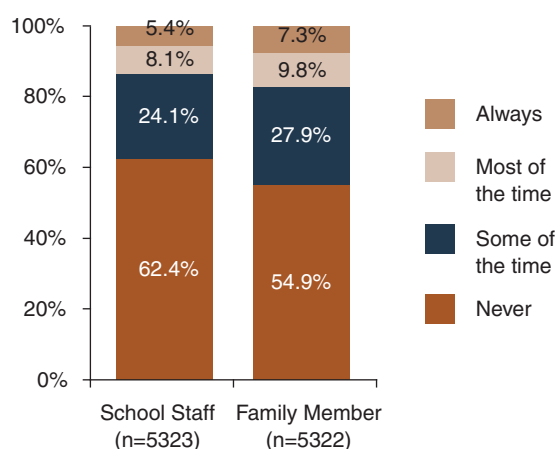
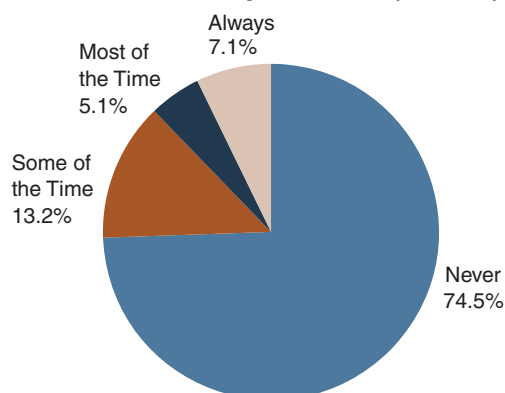


Figure 21. Frequency of Intervention by Students' Family Members (n=5282)



reported incidents to a family member how often a family member had talked to school staff about the incident. Only a quarter (25.5%) said that the family member ever addressed the issue with school staff (see Figure 21).

Reasons for Not Reporting Harassment or Assault

Students who did not tell school personnel about their experiences with harassment or assault were asked why they did not do so (see Table 3). The most common themes among these responses were: 1) they doubted that staff would effectively address the situation; 2) they had fears related to making the situation worse; 3) they had concerns about confidentiality; 4) they were concerned about staffs' reaction; 5) they viewed their experience as not severe enough to be reported; 6) they reported other ways of dealing with being victimized in school, such as choosing to handle the situation on their own; and 7) obstacles to reporting existed.

Doubts that Effective Intervention Would Occur. As shown in Table 3, the largest number of responses to why students did not report harassment was related to beliefs about school staff intervention (39.6%). Over a fifth (22.8%) of students believed that even if they had reported it, either nothing or nothing effective would be done to address the situation:

I never reported being harassed or assaulted to a teacher or staff person because they would not have done anything about it. (Female student, 9th grade, SC)

They would not have done anything, because in a small town school such as mine the teachers and principal hesitate to take affirmative action for fear of hurting the student in question's reputation. (Female student, 10th grade, MA)

The couple of times it happened, I pretty much blew it off; but even if I had reported it, they really wouldn't have done anything. (Male student, 11th grade, OH)

Almost a fifth (16.8%) of these students felt it was "not worth it" or pointless to report. For most of them, these feelings were a result of previous, unsuccessful experiences of reporting harassment:

In the past when I have [reported], teachers, principals, NO ONE did anything about it. It just seems pointless to try to get help even now... (Female student, 12th grade, CA)

I've always been picked on, and the staff has never resolved the problems previously... Only one more year. That's what I keep telling myself. (Female student, 11th grade, OK)

I knew based on previous experience that the people in charge would not do anything about it. (Male student, 10th grade, TX)

Fears Related to Making the Situation Worse.

As shown in Table 3, about a quarter of students (22.8%) mentioned fears that reporting incidents of harassment and assault to school personnel would exacerbate the situation. Some of these students (7.8%) generally mentioned that the reporting process itself could make the situation worse.

Table 3. Reasons Students Did Not Report Incidents of Harassment or Assault to School Staff (n=4545)

| | % of students (number) reporting specific response | |
|---|---|----------|
| Doubts that Effective Intervention Would Occur | | |
| Believed nothing would be done to address the situation | 22.8% | (n=1034) |
| Reporting is not worth it (e.g., pointless, reporting hasn't been effective in the past) | 16.8% | (n=765) |
| Fears Related to Making the Situation Worse | | |
| Safety concerns (e.g., fear of retaliation, physical violence) | 11.0% | (n=502) |
| Afraid of the situation getting worse/making it worse | 7.8% | (n=354) |
| Did not want to be a “snitch” or “tattle-tale | 4.0% | (n=180) |
| Confidentiality issues (e.g., fear of being “outed”) | 3.2% | (n=144) |
| Concerns About Staffs’ Reactions | | |
| Students felt too embarrassed/uncomfortable/ashamed | 6.3% | (n=286) |
| Doubted they would be taken seriously or believed | 3.8% | (n=171) |
| Teachers or other school staff are homophobic | 2.8% | (n=126) |
| Fear of being judged or treated differently | 2.0% | (n=90) |
| Teachers participate in harassment | <1% | (n=43) |
| Students concerned teachers wouldn’t understand | <1% | (n=26) |
| Did not trust staff member | <1% | (n=21) |
| Uncertain about staff reaction | <1% | (n=7) |
| Perceptions of the Severity of Harassment | | |
| Not a big deal/Not serious enough | 18.4% | (n=835) |
| Used to it (e.g., harassment is part of life) | 1.7% | (n=78) |
| Students Addressing Matters on Their Own | 11.7% | (n=530) |
| Barriers to Reporting Exist (e.g., lack of evidence) | 2.3% | (n=103) |
| Other Reasons for Not Reporting (e.g., unspecified fear, concerned about getting in trouble) | 6.7% | (n=305) |

These students were afraid of what would happen if they told a staff person and did not want to deal with the consequences of reporting. Several of these students did not want to draw attention to themselves or “start trouble”:

Because I felt that some of the situations would cause more trouble for me... (Male student, 12th grade, MN)

I felt as though it wouldn't help the situation, but make it worse by my saying something. (Female student, 12th grade, GA)

About a tenth (11.0%) of students expressed explicit safety concerns, such as a fear of retaliation, often in the form of physical violence:

I don't want the harassment to escalate into physical assault. I'd rather keep hearing it than get beat up. (Female student, 12th grade, CA)

Because I felt threatened and I didn't want to agitate the situation even further. (Male student, 9th grade, OR)

Reporting to them might make things worse because then the kids harassing us would just harass us outside of school too rather than just at school where any violence would be stopped. (Transgender student, 11th grade, CA)

Some students (4.0%) wanted to avoid being labeled a “snitch” or “tattle-tale” because the accompanying peer disapproval and added harassment would make the situation worse:

If you report things like that, many of the students believe that you are a “tattle-tale” or that you can't fight your own battles, which can lead to you being ostracized. (Female student, 9th grade, IN)

I didn't want other people getting in trouble, because I felt that I would be made fun of more. The people that harassed me, wouldn't ever leave me alone again if they found out that I told on them (Student with “other” gender identity, 10th grade, CA)

Concerns about Confidentiality. Some students (3.2%) did not report incidents of harassment or assault to school authorities due to concerns about confidentiality. Specifically, many of these

students were concerned with coming out to school personnel and about potentially being “outed” to family or the school community:

Because I'm too embarrassed to come out about my sexuality and I don't want my parents to be told by my teachers. (Female student, 7th grade, PA)

I usually don't tell staff, because I'm not comfortable with all of them knowing my sexual orientation. (Male student, 9th grade, IN)

Concerns about Staffs' Reactions. Students expressed concerns about how teachers would react to them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression if they reported the harassment or assault. Some students (6.3%) expressed feeling too uncomfortable or embarrassed to report the incident. The majority of students in this group simply said “it is embarrassing” and “too uncomfortable” to report. A few students provided lengthier answers, describing discomfort discussing issues related to their sexual orientation:

I feel uncomfortable discussing anything to do with my sexual orientation, although not necessarily because of specific teacher prejudices. Rather, I feel uncomfortable with how I will be viewed by my peers and teachers as a whole, and I feel as though admitting harassment bothers me is a sign of weakness that stems from being gay. (Male student, 11th grade, Texas)

It would have been uncomfortable. I live in the South...Tennessee...Telling a teacher that I was being picked on because I am bisexual isn't something I want to do. (Female student, 10th grade, TN)

A number of students (3.8%) expressed doubt that they would be taken seriously or believed by teachers or other school staff if they were to report incidents of victimization:

I don't report the harassment because I'm terrified of them not believing me or thinking that I just make the stuff I say up. (Female student, 10th grade, AR)

Because I would not have been taken seriously at all, and the teacher/staff would take the other person's side. (Male student, 11th grade, SC)

Several students (2.8%) were deterred from reporting victimization because they thought that school personnel were homophobic and therefore would not be helpful. Students reported that it is not only teachers who are homophobic, but also administrative figures, such as principals. These responses include both perceptions that school staff would be homophobic as well as prior experiences where the student felt that staff were homophobic:

I was afraid of being harassed by the openly anti-gay teachers. Teachers love you as long as you fit into their little mold, and to get ahead in a class teachers need to love you. If you cause any problems, especially in gender and sexual orientation areas, you aren't loved. (Female student, 10th grade, TX)

Our administration would not react to a claim of harassment. Our principal is homophobic, and because I am in the GSA and openly lesbian, they have ignored claims I have made to having property stolen in the past. (Female student, 12th grade, WI)

A smaller number of students (2.0%) expressed concerns that they would be judged or treated differently by school personnel if they were to report incidents of harassment and assault:

I don't want to be seen as the overly sensitive gay kid by the administration. (Male student, 11th grade, WA).

Because I knew I was going to be treated differently by them. Because I was a guy, doing girl-like things, and was clearly gay. (Male student, 12th grade, VA).

An additional obstacle for students reporting incidents of victimization was when the perpetrator was a teacher or other school personnel:

Because some of the time it was a teacher or staff person, and the other staff would take their side over mine. (Female student, 12th grade, FL)

“I did not inform any teachers or staff members because I felt that they would not understand my situation, and that they would not accept my sexuality, or that they would view me differently afterwards.”

Because they really don't care. Some of them have harassed my friends and me for our sexual orientation. (Student with “other” gender identity, 12th grade, KS)

Similarly, other respondents were reluctant to report incidents because they had actually witnessed teachers participating in the harassment of other students. For example, a female 7th grade student from Kansas explained that she did not report being harassed at school “because they [teachers] would just make fun of me too.” These responses are particularly disturbing and underscore the considerably negative school climate many LGBT students experience. Victimization by teachers, especially when witnessed by other students, can cause additional harm by sending a message in the classroom or school community that harassment is acceptable. Harassment of students by teachers also serves as a reminder that safer schools efforts must address all members of the school community and not just the student body.

Students also reported being concerned about school staff not understanding the situation and a slightly smaller number expressed concern about trusting school personnel:

I did not inform any teachers or staff members because I felt that they would not understand my situation, and that they would not accept

my sexuality, or that they would view me differently afterwards. (Male student, 12th grade, ID)

I hate when teachers say “get over it you’re not in elementary school anymore.” Also I just generally don’t trust people so it is really hard for me to speak up for myself. (Female student, 10th grade, WA)

A handful of students simply mentioned being uncertain about staff reaction as a concern for not always reporting incidents of harassment and assault. A female 12th grade student in Oklahoma mentioned, “It’s a small school, I don’t mind talking to students, but I don’t know what to expect if I told a school staff member.” This illustrates the importance of school personnel taking steps that let students know that they will not tolerate anti-LGBT harassment and that they are supportive of LGBT students. If school staff send the message that they will be responsive to victimized students, these students may be more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault.

In order to create safer school environments for LGBT students, it is crucial that teachers, social workers, and all other school personnel receive adequate training and support about how to effectively address the victimization that so many of these youth experience.

Students’ Perceptions of the Severity of Harassment. Nearly a fifth of students (18.4%) explained that they did not report incidents of victimization to school personnel because they considered it to be not serious enough. Several of these students specifically expressed that the harassment was “not a big deal”:

I do not see it as a huge deal. There will always be ignorant people in the world, and it seems a little wasteful to stop and worry about it. Nothing serious has ever really happened to me. (Male student, 11th grader, PA)

I felt that because the harassment wasn’t too serious. Words were said once or twice that I didn’t feel comfortable with, but not to the point where I felt threatened. I normally handled things on my own. (Female student, 11th grade, ID)

Sometimes it’s so minor that it doesn’t even bother me, and I end up forgetting. No one in my school really has the guts to be outright anti-anything thankfully. But you can see it in their eyes. (Female student, 11th grade, MA)

Some students were concerned that school staff would not support them unless they had been physically assaulted. For instance, a female 7th grade student in Texas mentioned, “it wouldn’t have made a difference because I was not physically injured.”

Because we lack information about the specific nature of the actual incidents of students’ victimization, we cannot examine the significance of these events for students who said it was not serious or “not a big deal.” It may be that the events were truly minor. We did find that students who reported that the harassment they experienced was “not a big deal” did have lower levels of victimization than other students.²⁶ Nevertheless, these students did experience victimization in school, and for some, the victimization included physical assault — arguably a “big deal” under any circumstances.²⁷

It may also be that some students have a high tolerance for victimization or have become so used to being victimized, and have therefore concluded that their experiences are “not a big deal.” In fact, a small number of students (1.7%) expressed this view:

Because it gets to be such a regular thing that I have learned to live with it. It’s like if there’s a change you don’t like in your house with the furniture, you just adjust around it or [live] with it. I’ve learned to adjust. (Male student, 10th grade, TX)

I receive so much harassment, that it sometimes is impossible to turn in everyone, and I receive so much of it, that I have learned to not let it affect me. There [are] times that it does affect me, but I have to deal with it, so I might as well toughen up. (Male student, 12th grade, KS)

It is unsettling that for some students victimization is something they are accustomed to and do not feel is worth reporting. Further research can shed light on this troubling theme by examining the experiences of harassment so common that students have learned to accept it.

Additional Ways Students Dealt With Being Victimized in School. We found that almost a tenth (11.7%) of students said that they handled incidents of harassment or assault themselves. Whereas most respondents did not provide specifics and instead stated that they “took care of it,” some implied an element of self-reliance in handling the situation:

I stand up for myself and don't feel the need to report any incidents of verbal harassment. (Female student, 11th grade, WA)

Because I took care of it most of the time by myself, I'm one of those people who still have self confidence even though they go through something like this. (Female student, 9th grade, FL)

I take care of it myself and speak up to the person, letting them know what they did was wrong. (Female student, 11th grade, IL)

People are stupid, and I've learned that I can fight back in other ways. More peaceful and adult-like ways. (Female student, 11th grade, NY)

A few students reported that when it comes to dealing with incidents of harassment and assault, they simply ignored the incident or tried not to allow it to bother them:

Because I take a deep breath and tell myself I only have to deal with stupid people for a few more years. I don't like confrontation, so I just ignore them, and I'm really good at it. (Female student, 9th grade, GA)

I don't care what people say about me. If they want to waste their time telling me things I know are not true, then that's their problem. They just have no life, and nothing better to do with their time. That's stupid. (Female student, 9th grade, PA)

It is possible that some students are truly not bothered by the harassment they experienced. It is also possible that appearing unaffected is a coping mechanism used by students to protect themselves from feeling victimized. Further research is needed to explore the reasons why some students are able to ignore harassment as well as why this response may be more appealing

“I go to a Catholic school. Homosexuality is against the religion and there is no school policy against it [victimization based on sexual orientation].”

than reporting the harassment. It would also be important to learn about what possible effects ignoring the harassment may have on a student's psychological well-being.

A handful of students specifically mentioned resorting to physical retaliation to deal with victimization. For example, a female student from New Mexico said, “I did not report it because school staff does not really help the problem much, they make it worse or say ‘we can't do much about it.’ In that case I take matters into my own hands, which end up in school fights.” Although it is certainly disturbing that any student would resort to physical retaliation to deal with victimization, the number of students who indicated doing so was quite small.

Obstacles Encountered in Reporting Harassment or Assault. A small percentage of students (2.3%) cited obstacles that prevented them from reporting incidents of harassment and assault, such as not having proof or not being able to identify the attackers:

Often, I don't know who the attackers (verbal or otherwise) are. These are people I don't even know. How does [someone] report someone one doesn't know? Quite simple, one doesn't. (Student with “other” gender identity, 10th grade, FL)

They never do anything about it because there isn't proof. It happens to friends/people I knew, and because there wasn't solid proof they could see in front of them, they can't do

anything. And if they tried, nothing would result out of it. (Female student, 11th grade, NY)

Some students mentioned specific barriers related to their school not having a policy that protects students based on sexual orientation:

I go to a Catholic school. Homosexuality is against the religion and there is no school policy against it [victimization based on sexual orientation]. (Female student, 8th grade, PA)

Under the zero-tolerance policy for harassment in the school, sexual orientation is not listed as a factor, and I would be ignored. (Female student, 11th grade, OH)

These responses highlight the consequences of not having school harassment/assault policies that enumerate categories of protection including sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Some students who have been victimized because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression may not feel it is worth reporting incidents of assault or harassment because they believe that without a formal process in place nothing will be done to ameliorate the situation. Adopting and enforcing school policies that specifically prohibit harassment and assault based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression could reduce these institutional barriers for reporting anti-LGBT harassment.

In order to create a safe learning environment for all students, schools should work toward appropriately and effectively responding to incidents of victimization. Nearly all of the reasons given by students for not reporting victimization that they experienced in school could be addressed by school personnel. In order to counter the perception that school staff will not address incidents of victimization, staff should always respond to each incident brought to their attention, as well as inform students who experienced the incident of the action that was taken. Training all members of the school community to provide adequate support could increase the likelihood of reporting by students who are harassed or assaulted at school. Such efforts could, in turn, improve school climate for all students.

Students' Reports on the Nature of School Staff's Responses to Harassment and Assault

Although most students did not report incidents of harassment and assault to school personnel, more than a third (37.6%) of the students in the survey did choose to tell a staff member when they were victimized at school (see Figure 20). In order to examine staff's responses to incidents of harassment and assault, we asked students who had reported incidents to describe what the staff person did when notified about the incident (see Table 4). The most common responses were: 1) staff did nothing in response; 2) staff talked to the perpetrator about the incident; 3) the perpetrator was disciplined; and 4) staff or student filed a report of the incident or it was referred to another staff person.

Staff Did Nothing in Response. The most common (33.8%) response from students was that staff did nothing to address incidents of harassment or assault:

Almost every time I have gone to the school office with a bullying problem I was turned away and wasn't helped. I ended up with a black-eye. It happened right in the hallway and no one did anything. The person wasn't even suspended. (Female student, 10th grade, TX)

I told them the story and they couldn't do anything about it. (Female student, 9th grade, FL)

Nothing actually. Rocks were thrown at me and nothing was done about it. (Male student, 11th grade, OR)

Within this category, several students (2.2%) reported that staff told them to simply ignore incidents of harassment or assault:

They told me to ignore it. Mostly because they themselves are against me being a gay transboy. (Transgender student, 10th grade, PA)

Talk to me about it and told me to "ignore it". In all honesty, no, I will NOT "ignore" it. I am a human being and don't deserve to be treated [that way] because I am gay. (Male student, 10th grade, NY)

A smaller number of students (1.7%) indicated that staff simply ignored their complaint:

They ignored it. I reported it to my dance coach and she didn't think it was a big deal. I could tell she didn't want to deal with it. (Female student, 12th grade, MI)

The teachers and other staff ignore the harassment of me based on my sexual orientation. (Male student, 10th grade, TX)

They did absolutely nothing and just turned their cheek the other way. (Female student, 10th grade, NY)

One of the reasons that students did not report incidents was a concern that staff would blame them because of their sexual orientation. Indeed, this concern was realized in the responses of some students about the nature of staff intervention. Of the students who indicated that school staff did nothing when they were told about harassment or assault, some (1.5%) were blamed for the victimization that they experienced because of their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression:

The counselor told me to be less "flamboyant" about my sexuality. (Female student, 9th grade, CO)

Table 4. School Staff's Responses to Students' Reports of Harassment or Assault (n=1838)

| | % of students (number) reporting specific response | |
|--|---|---------|
| Staff Did Nothing | | |
| Nothing/no action taken | 33.8% | (n=621) |
| Told to ignore it | 2.2% | (n=40) |
| Staff ignored them/it | 1.7% | (n=32) |
| The reporting student was blamed | 1.5% | (n=28) |
| Staff Talked to Perpetrator/Told Perpetrator to Stop | 22.9% | (n=421) |
| Perpetrator Was Disciplined (e.g., detention, suspension) | 15.9% | (n=292) |
| Staff or Student Filed a Report of the Incident, or it Was Referred to Another Staff Person | 11.0% | (n=202) |
| Other Type of Action Was Taken (e.g., parents were contacted, non-specific action - "took care of the situation") | 10.7% | (n=197) |
| Staff Promised That They Would Look Into or Address the Situation | 8.4% | (n=154) |
| Staff Provided Some Form of Support | 6.7% | (n=124) |
| The Reporting Student and Perpetrator Were Made to Talk to Each Other (e.g., peer mediation) | 1.7% | (n=31) |
| The Reporting Student and Perpetrator Were Separated From Each Other | 1.6% | (n=30) |
| The Incident Was Investigated | 1.1% | (n=21) |
| The Reporting Student Was Disciplined | 1.1% | (n=20) |
| Staff Attempted to Educate Student(s) | 1.3% | (n=23) |
| Other Responses | 3.3% | (n=60) |

They said that “not everyone is as open and accepting as they should be” and that I needed to “tone it down” because drawing attention to myself was part of the problem. (Male student, 12th grade, NY)

They said that I needed to stop flaunting my sexuality. (Transgender student, 9th grade, VA)

They said to just let it go and essentially get used to it. My principal even said that I had the choice to make it go away by not starting a GSA and by not choosing to be gay. (Male student, 11th grade, TX)

Other students reported that nothing was done because a staff person did not witness the incident. For example, a female student from Michigan said, “[School staff] pretty much shrugged it off and told me because there wasn’t any hard proof on who did what exactly, that there wasn’t anything they could do, other than send me to the nurse when needed.”

Staff Spoke to the Perpetrator. Almost a quarter of students (22.9%) reported that staff responded to reports of harassment by talking to the perpetrator and, in some cases, ordering the perpetrator to stop the behavior. Some of these students also commented on the outcome of the intervention. Although there were students who reported that this intervention put a stop to the harassment, others said that the intervention was not sufficient because the harassment either continued or became worse:

[School staff personnel] talked to the person who did it. They didn’t get in trouble for it and in the end it just made the bullying worse... (Male student, 10th grade, MO)

He [school staff member] told them to leave me alone, but the person never did. It actually got kinda worse. Eventually, after a month or two, the person who was harassing me was changed to a different class, but she still bothered me on the bus. (Female student, 8th grade, UT)

Disciplinary Action. Close to a fifth of students (15.9%) who reported incidents to school staff said that the perpetrator was officially disciplined. The most common types of discipline were detentions, suspensions, and forced apologies (i.e., making the perpetrator apologize to the victim). Other

forms of discipline mentioned were formal warnings, threats of more serious punishment, sending the perpetrator to the principal’s office, police involvement, and, in some cases, expulsion:

They took my statement, took pictures of the stab wound, and called the police to interview me. The student was expelled. (Female student, 8th grade, GA)

Some of them simply warned the student(s), others sent them to the office and had them dealt with by higher-ups as well as the police, in some situations. (Student with “other” gender identity, 10th grade, ME)

He [the perpetrator] was suspended for 2 days after threatening to kill me, and also sexually abusing me. Also, slamming a desk at me. (Female student, 9th grade, OH)

It is important to note that some students who said that staff had intervened did not always report that the intervention was helpful. A number of students explicitly stated that disciplinary actions were ineffective, such as a 9th grade transgender student from Florida who commented that “the student whom I was reporting about was let off with a warning and I received more grief for telling a teacher.” This response illustrates the need for further investigation into the factors that contribute to positive outcomes for the victimized student when disciplinary actions, as well as other forms of intervention, are taken.

Reporting Student was Punished. Some students (1.1%) reported that they themselves were punished by school staff when they reported incidents of harassment or assault:

Suspended us both even though I did nothing and let him punch me in the face. I afterwards went to the hospital and needed stitches in my lip while he went away unharmed. (Male student, 12th grade, PA)

Went through interrogation at [school] with the principal and we were both suspended, me for 1 day and the person for a week. (Female student, 11th grade, NY)

Promised to Look Into Situation. Some students (8.4%) indicated that staff said they would investigate or handle the matter. Several of these

students said that the staff person failed to follow through with these promises, such as a 10th grade transgender student from Missouri: “He said he’d ‘take care of it’ but none of the students were spoken to or dealt with.” This failure to follow through with action after making a commitment to the student to address the issue is perhaps even worse than doing nothing at all, as failing to follow through may erode a student’s trust in school staff.

Attempted to Educate. In some cases, educators used reports of harassment as a learning opportunity, choosing to educate the perpetrators or the broader student body about bullying or prejudice. A few students (1.3%) reported that school personnel attempted to provide education about issues such as homophobia:

They called in the student for disciplinary action, then called a school meeting to discuss why what that student did was wrong. (Student with “other” gender identity, 11th grade, NM)

Addressed the problem. The teacher informed everyone that we were not intolerant at our school. (Female student, 11th grade, MN)

I reported it to the sponsor of our GSA which I am the Vice President of and he notified the principal who told us we had her support to run an anti-bullying campaign. (Male student, 10th grade, AR)

When harassment and assault are motivated by bias or prejudice, educators can address the situation by educating students about bias-based bullying and harassment. When school staff address these issues in an open forum such as a classroom or assembly, they may be sending a message to students that behavior motivated by prejudice is unacceptable and that dialogue about such behaviors is important for addressing intolerance and bias. A few students, however, reported that the attempt to educate students about incidents of harassment or assault was poorly executed and, therefore, ineffective:

The teacher spoke to the class, my things had been damaged and I am often called derogatory slang, however the class responded by laughing at me and calling the teacher a fag. (Female student, 10th grade, TN)

“I reported it to the sponsor of our GSA which I am the Vice President of and he notified the principal who told us we had her support to run an anti-bullying campaign.”

Nothing really happened, they made a lecture about third party harassment and then stopped. (Male student, 9th grade, WA)

Filed a Report or Referred Student. Several students (11.0%) indicated that a report was made (e.g., filed an incident report) or that the incident was referred to someone else, usually a guidance counselor or a higher authority (administrator, principal, or, in a few cases, the police). Although most students did not report whether there were further actions as a result of a report or a referral being made, several specifically commented that staff did not follow-up:

The situation was reported but no action was taken. I was basically told to “turn the other cheek.” (Female student, grade not reported, LA)

They made me fill out a complaint form, but then I never heard from them again. (Male student, 9th grade, OH)

Offered Support. Several students (6.7%) indicated that when notified of an incident of harassment or assault, staff members provided some form of support, such as offering advice on how to handle incidents or providing comfort to the reporting student:

Gave me suggestion to talk to the student about why they were doing it. They talked to the student. (Transgender student, 12th grade, OR)

Comforted me and told me to come back if anything else happened. (Female student, 12th grade, NY)

The counselor basically told me advice on how to handle the situation and letting me know that being harassed is not okay. She immediately took action and resolved the issue. (Male student, 11th grade, FL)

A few students commented that, although staff offered comfort, they did not attempt to take action against the perpetrator or address the specific incident of harassment or assault:

[School staff member] gasped and said it was horrible, but didn't necessarily do anything about it. (Gender not reported, grade not reported, MA)

[School staff member] nodded and said that it was wrong to do that, and everyone has their own opinion. She didn't say anything to the person. (Female student, 8th grade, VA)

Mostly just tried to comfort me and shut me up. No real action was taken. Teachers and staff want to pacify for the most part. (Transgender student, 11th grade, AR)

Failing to intervene when harassment is reported, blaming students for their own victimization, and failing to appropriately address the situation are unacceptable and potentially harmful outcomes. As discussed above, many of the students who did not report incidents of harassment or assault to school authorities feared exactly these negative outcomes. Thus, staff who do not address reports of student victimization may not only be failing that student, but also sending a message that prevents other students from reporting when they are harassed or assaulted at school.

Effectiveness of Staff Responses to Victimization

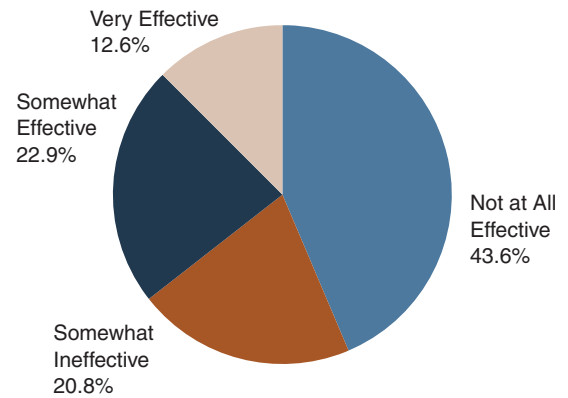
Students in our survey who said that they had reported incidents of victimization to school staff were also asked how effective staff members were in addressing the problem. As shown in Figure 22, only about a third (35.5%) of students who responded to the question believed that staff responded effectively to reports of victimization. We examined students' determinations of effectiveness and the nature of the response. Students were more likely to report that school staff's responses were effective when the staff spoke with the perpetrator about the incident, disciplinary action was taken, a report was filed or referral was made, or they received support from the staff person.²⁸ Students were least likely to report that response was effective when staff did nothing to address the incident, they themselves were blamed for the incident, or when staff simply promised to look into the matter.²⁹

For students who did not report incidents of harassment or assault, the most common reason for not reporting was the belief that nothing would be done. For students who had reported harassment or assault, the most common outcome was that nothing was, in fact, done in response. School personnel are charged with providing a safe learning environment for all students. By not effectively addressing harassment and assault, those students are denied an adequate opportunity to learn. It is particularly troubling that some students were told by school staff that, because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, they deserved the mistreatment that they experienced or somehow brought it upon themselves. This type of response may exacerbate the problem of an already hostile school climate for LGBT students and may deter them from reporting future incidents of harassment or assault.

When students reported incidents of harassment or assault to staff members, the interventions had varying degrees of effectiveness. Since we do not know the circumstances of the harassment or assault, we cannot know why certain staff responses (e.g., talking to a perpetrator) work in one instance and not in another. School- or district-wide implementation of educator trainings on issues related to LGBT students and bias-based bullying and harassment may help to give

educators some tools for effectively intervening. In addition, such trainings may help educators become more aware of the experiences of harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, which could play a vital role in improving school climate for LGBT students.

Figure 22. Effectiveness of Reporting Incidents of Victimization to a Teacher or Other Staff Person (n=2001)



Effects of a Hostile School Climate

Key Findings

LGBT students who experienced high levels of in-school victimization based on their sexual orientation or gender expression:

- Had grade point averages (GPAs) almost half a grade lower than other students;
- Were less likely than other students to plan to pursue any post-secondary education;
- Were about three times as likely to have missed school in the past month because of safety concerns;
- Were less likely to feel a sense of belonging to their school community; and
- Had lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression and anxiety.

In-school victimization experienced by LGBT students can hinder their academic success and educational aspirations. It may also undermine their sense of belonging to their school community. In addition, being harassed or assaulted at school may have a negative impact on students' mental health and self-esteem. To this end, we examined whether there were relationships between students' reports of in-school victimization and their academic achievement, educational aspirations, absenteeism, sense of school belonging, mental health, and self-esteem.

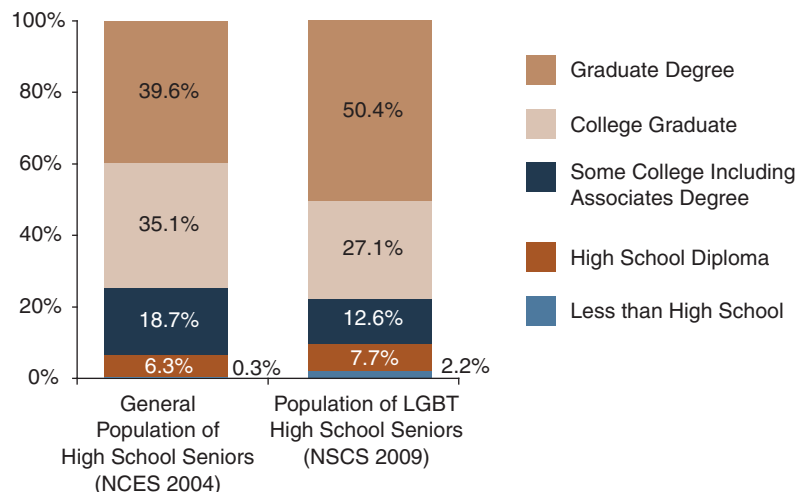
Educational Aspirations and Academic Achievement

In order to examine the relationship between school safety and academic success, we asked students about their academic achievement and their aspirations with regard to post-secondary education. Figure 23 shows the educational aspirations of LGBT high school seniors from our 2009 survey along with those of the general population of high school seniors from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).³⁰ Half (50.4%) of LGBT high school seniors in our survey reported that they planned to pursue a graduate degree (e.g., Master's degree, PhD, or MD), which was more than the national sample of high school seniors (39.6%).³¹ However, the percentage of LGBT students who did not plan to pursue any type of post-secondary education (obtaining a high

school diploma only or not finishing high school) was greater than that of the national sample (9.9% versus 6.6%).³² It is important to note that the GLSEN survey only included students who had been in school during the 2008–2009 school year. Thus, the percentage of LGBT students not pursuing post-secondary education would be higher with the inclusion of students who had already dropped out of high school.

In our survey, we found that victimization was related to students' future education plans. As illustrated in Figure 24, LGBT students who reported high levels of in-school victimization because of their sexual orientation or gender expression were more likely than other students to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (college, vocational-technical, or trade school).³³ For example, 13.6% of students who experienced high severity of victimization because of their gender expression did not plan to go to college, compared to 8.9% of those who had experienced low frequencies of physical harassment. A higher frequency of harassment and assault was also related to lower academic achievement among LGBT students. As shown in Figure 25, the reported grade point average (GPA) of students who were more frequently victimized because of their sexual orientation or gender expression was significantly lower than for students who were less often harassed or assaulted.³⁴ For example, the

Figure 23. Educational Aspirations: LGBT Student Population vs. General Population of Students
(percentage for high school seniors only)



GPA of students who experience high severity of victimization based on their gender expression was almost half a grade lower than the GPA of other students (2.7 versus 3.1).

Absenteeism

Students who are regularly harassed or assaulted in school may attempt to avoid these hurtful experiences by not attending school and may be more likely to miss school than students who do not experience such victimization. In this way, school-based victimization may impinge on a student's right to an education. We found that experiences of harassment and assault were, in fact, related to missing days of school.³⁵ As shown in Figure 26, students were about three times as likely to have missed school in the past month if they had experienced high levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation (57.7% versus 18.0%) or how they expressed their gender (54.3% versus 19.9%).

Figure 24. Lowered Educational Aspirations and Severity of Victimization

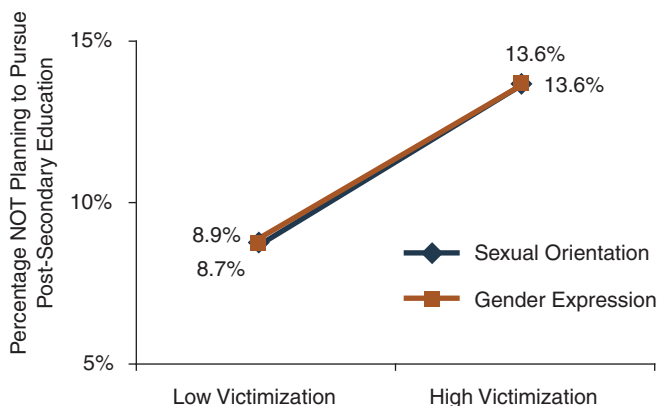


Figure 25. Academic Achievement and Severity of Victimization

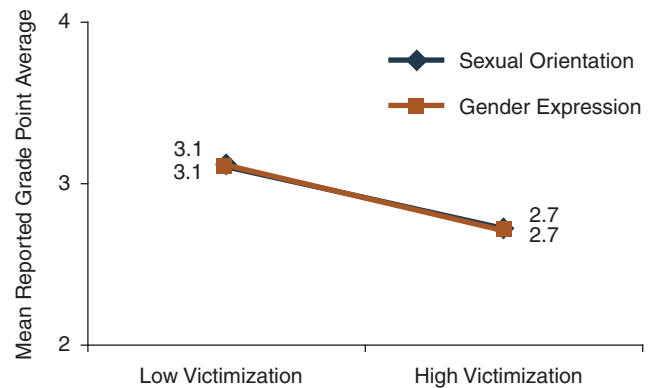
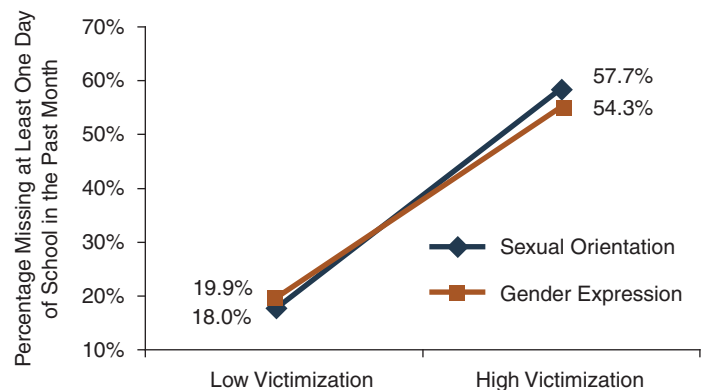


Figure 26. Missing School Because of Safety Concerns and Severity of Victimization



Sense of School Belonging

The degree to which students feel accepted by and a part of their school community is another important indicator of school climate and is related to a number of educational outcomes. For example, having a greater sense of belonging to one's school is generally related to greater academic motivation and effort as well as higher academic achievement.³⁶ Students who experience harassment and assault at school may feel excluded and disconnected from their school community.

In order to examine LGBT students' sense of belonging to their school community, survey participants were given a series of statements about feeling like a part of their school and were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements (see Appendix for

survey participants' responses to scale items).³⁷ We found that in-school victimization was related to a decreased sense of belonging to one's school.³⁸ As illustrated in Figure 27, students who experienced high severities of victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression had lower levels of school belonging than students who experienced low severities of victimization in school.

Psychological Well-Being

Previous research has shown that experiences of victimization in school can negatively affect well-being for students in general.³⁹ Given their increased likelihood for experiencing a negative school climate, it is especially important to examine this relationship for the LGBT students in our survey. As shown in Figure 28 and 29, LGBT students who reported higher levels of victimization regarding their sexual orientation or gender expression had higher levels of depression and anxiety than those who reported lower levels of those types of victimization.⁴⁰ As shown in Figure 30, we found that higher levels of victimization were related to lower levels of self-esteem.⁴¹

As we have shown in this section on the effects of victimization, increased harassment and assault was associated with poorer educational outcomes, such as lower achievement, school attendance, and educational aspirations. This relationship may be explained, in part, by the effect of victimization on psychological well-being — increased victimization may lead to poorer psychological

well-being and poorer psychological well-being may lead to poorer educational outcomes. When we took into account the effect of psychological well-being (depression, anxiety, and self-esteem), the relationship between victimization and educational indicators was weakened. Table 5 shows the correlational relationships between victimization based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression and educational indicators (GPA, plans for attending college after high school, missing classes or days of school for safety reasons). The unshaded rows show the relationship between victimization and educational indicators without taking into account psychological well-being; the shaded rows show the same relationships while taking into account the well-being variables. In each case, the strength of the relationships between victimization and educational indicators was diminished once

Figure 27. Sense of School Belonging and Severity of Victimization

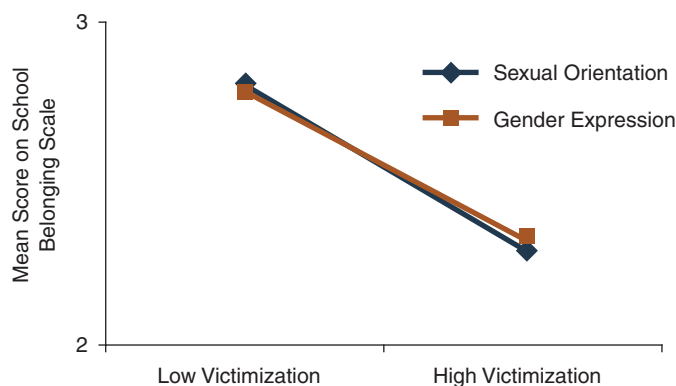


Figure 28. Relationship between Depression and Victimization

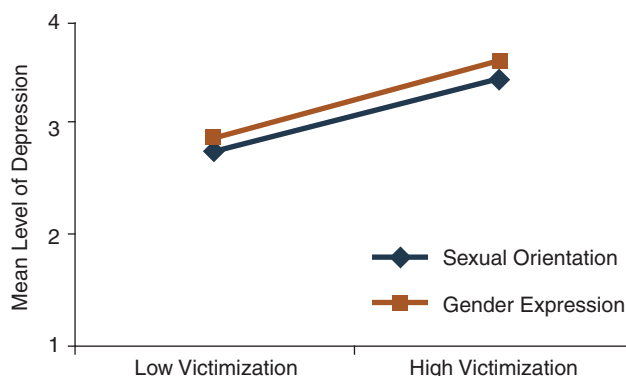
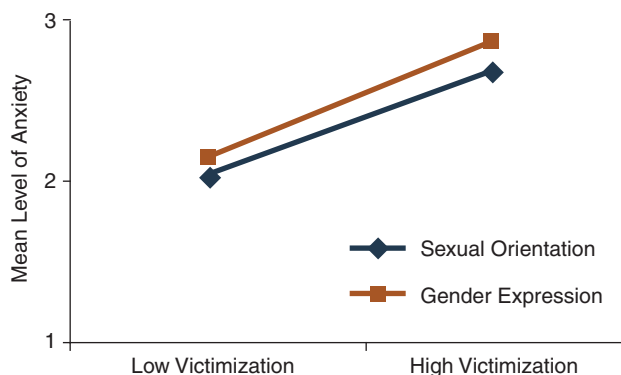


Figure 29. Relationship between Anxiety and Victimization



psychological well-being was accounted for.⁴² For example, the correlation between victimization based on sexual orientation and missing days of school was 0.49 but decreased to 0.40 when accounting for psychological well-being. However, it is important to note that the relationships between victimization and educational outcomes existed even after accounting for psychological well-being, indicating that in-school victimization has a negative effect on a student's educational success, above and beyond any effect it may have on their psychological well-being.

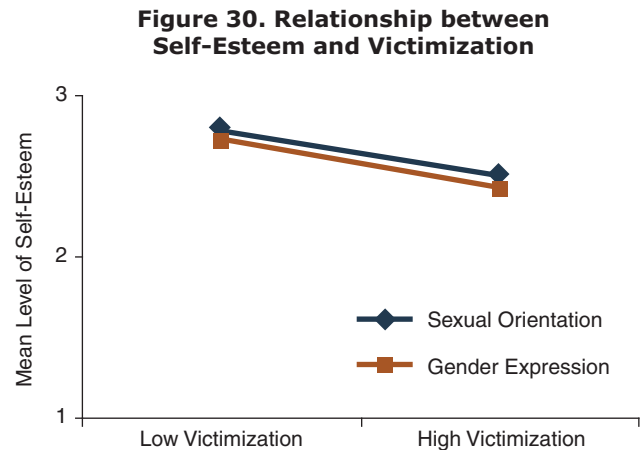
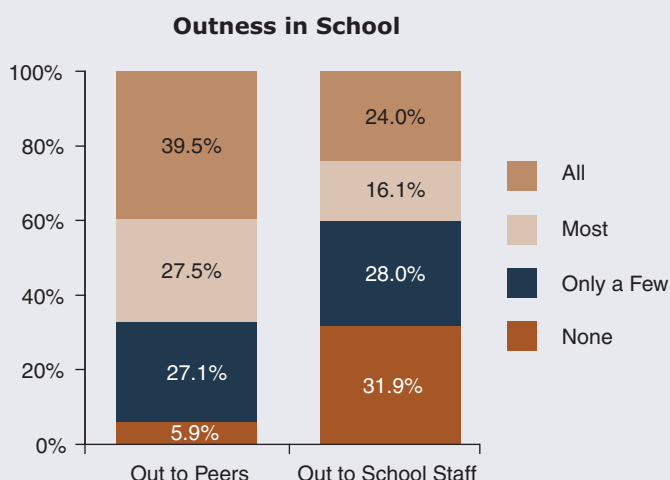


Table 5. The Role of Psychological Well-Being on the Relationship between Victimization and Academic Indicators

| Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation | GPA | Planning on College After High School | Missing Classes | Missing Days of School |
|---|-------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| | | | | |
| Correlation (Not Accounting for Psychological Well-Being) | -0.21 | -0.07 | 0.49 | 0.49 |
| Partial Correlation (Accounting for Psychological Well-Being) | -0.14 | -0.04 | 0.41 | 0.40 |
| Victimization Based on Gender Expression | GPA | Planning on College After High School | Missing Classes | Missing Days of School |
| | | | | |
| Correlation (Not Accounting for Psychological Well-Being) | -0.20 | -0.07 | 0.43 | 0.42 |
| Partial Correlation (Accounting for Psychological Well-Being) | -0.13 | -0.04 | 0.35 | 0.33 |

Insight on Being Out in School

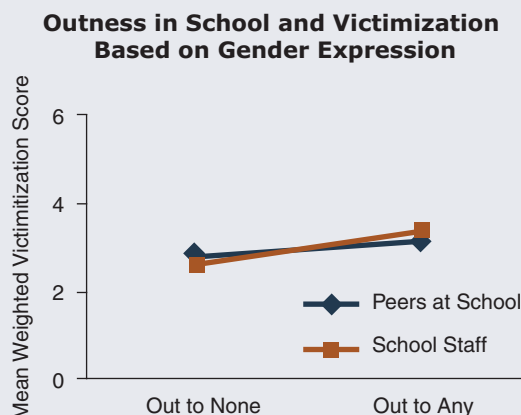
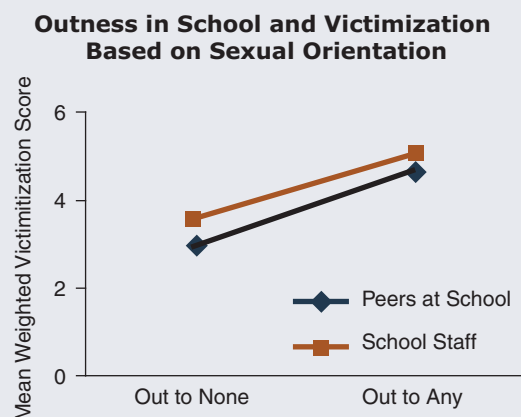
For students in general, LGBT or otherwise, being able to express oneself freely in school may help them feel more a part of their school. For LGBT students specifically, being able to be open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity at school may not only enhance their feelings of school belonging, but also contribute to healthy development and positive well-being. However, some LGBT students may feel that they cannot publicly acknowledge their sexual orientation and/or gender identity because it may single them out for harassment in school. In our survey, we found that outness in school was related to in-school victimization, but was also related to better psychological well-being and greater attachment to school. Thus, it is important that schools strive to be affirming, safe spaces for LGBT students by providing positive resources and combating name-calling, bullying, and harassment.



We asked students how out or open they were about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in school, both to other students and to school staff. Students were more likely to be out to peers than to school staff.⁴³ The majority of students (67.0%) were out to most or all of their peers, but less than half (40.1%) were out to all or most of the staff in their schools.

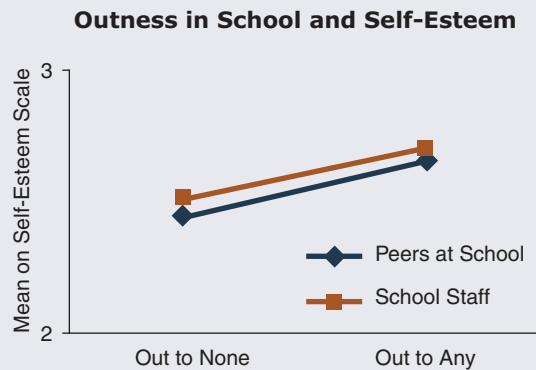
Outness → In-School Victimization

LGBT students who were out to their peers or school staff reported higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation than LGBT students who were not out in school.⁴⁴ Although the effect was not as strong, students who were out in school also reported higher levels of victimization based on gender expression than those who were not out.⁴⁵

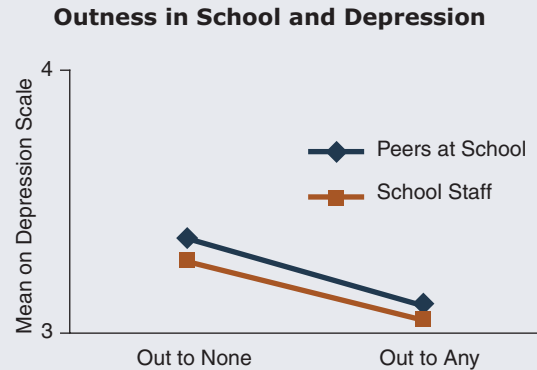


Outness → Psychological Well-Being

Students who were out to their peers or school staff reported better psychological well-being.



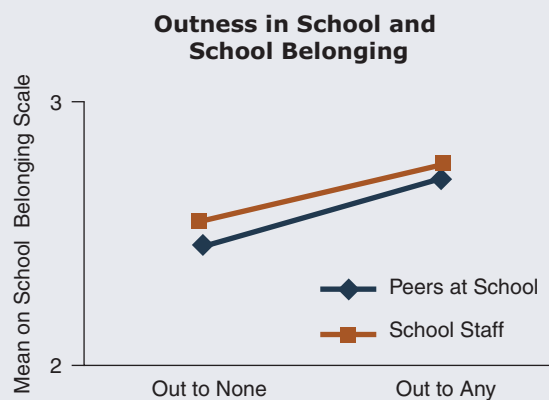
Being out to their peers at school and being out to school staff were both related to higher levels of self-esteem in LGBT students.⁴⁶



Being out to their peers at school and being out to school staff were both related to lower levels of depression in LGBT students.⁴⁷

Outness → School Belonging

Being out to other students and being out to school staff were both related to higher levels of school belonging in LGBT students.⁴⁸



LGBT-Related Resources and Supports in School

A background image of a school library. A student with long hair, wearing a light blue shirt, is sitting at a wooden table, leaning over and looking at books on a low shelf. The library has many wooden bookshelves filled with books, and the lighting is warm and natural.

Key Findings

- Less than half of LGBT students attended a school that had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student club that addressed LGBT issues in education.
- Most students did not have access to information about LGBT-related topics in their school library, through the Internet on school computers, or in their textbooks or other assigned readings.
- Approximately 1 out of 10 students were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events in their classes.
- Almost all students could identify at least one school staff member whom they believed was supportive of LGBT students in their school.
- Less than a third of students reported that their school administration was supportive of LGBT students.
- Few students reported that their school had a comprehensive harassment/assault policy that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.

The availability of resources and supports in school for LGBT students is another dimension of school climate. We asked students about several resources that may help to promote a safer environment and more positive school experiences for students: extracurricular student clubs that address LGBT student issues (such as Gay-Straight Alliances or GSAs), school personnel who are supportive of LGBT students, LGBT-inclusive curricular materials, and school policies for addressing incidents of harassment and assault.

Supportive Student Clubs

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) can provide LGBT students with an affirming space within a school environment that they may otherwise experience as hostile. As shown in Figure 31, almost half (44.6%) of students said that their school had a GSA or similar student club. Among students with a GSA at school, about three-quarters (75.3%) said that they ever attended club meetings (see Table 6). Considering availability and meeting attendance, only a third (33.6%) of all students in our survey had ever participated in a GSA. Nearly half (42.8%) of students with a GSA had participated as a leader or an officer in their club (see also Table 6).

We did not ask students who did not participate in their school's GSA why they did not do so. It is possible that these students did not have time in their schedules or were not comfortable attending GSA meetings. Regardless, this represents a segment of the LGBT student population that is further isolated from possible school supports.

We found that GSA attendance was significantly related to how out or open students were about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity at school: 36.8% of students who were not out to any of their peers attended GSA meetings at least some of the time ("sometimes," "often," or "frequently") compared to 65.1% of students who were out to at least a few of their peers.

Figure 31. Availability of LGBT-Related Resources in School

(percentage of students reporting that resource was available)

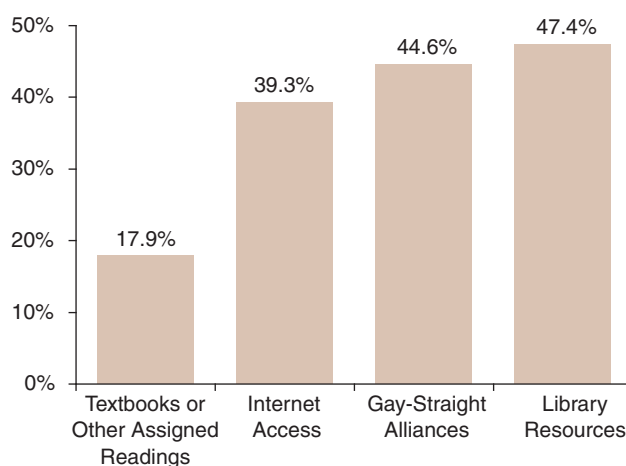


Table 6. Gay-Straight Alliance Participation

| Frequency of Attending Meetings (n=3219) | |
|---|-------|
| Never | 24.6% |
| Rarely | 11.5% |
| Sometimes | 11.1% |
| Often | 9.1% |
| Frequently | 43.6% |
| Acted as a Leader or Officer (n=2792) | |
| No | 57.2% |
| Yes | 42.8% |

Insight on LGBT Students and Extracurricular Activities

One element of students' school experience is their participation in and level of involvement with extracurricular activities, such as athletics, arts, and student government. For students in general, prior research has shown that participation in these types of school activities is positively linked to academic achievement and psychological well-being.⁴⁹ Yet students who experience frequent harassment at school may choose not to spend additional time at school and may be less likely to be involved in optional school activities like extracurricular clubs. These students may not gain the same benefits from extracurricular participation as students who experience less frequent harassment.

In order to understand the level of school participation of LGBT students, we asked students about their involvement in a variety of school activities. The table below shows the percentage of LGBT students who reported participating in various school activities and the percentage of students who reported being leaders or officers for each activity. Students were most likely to be involved in subject-matter clubs (40.4%) and arts-related activities, with over a quarter participating in debate or drama (40.5%), chorus or dance (31.9%), and band or orchestra (27.8%).

| Activity | Participate | Leader/Officer |
|---|-------------|----------------|
| Debate or drama | 40.5% | 12.1% |
| School subject-matter clubs (i.e., science, history, language, business, art) | 40.4% | 9.4% |
| Gay-Straight Alliance or similar club | 33.6% | 16.8% |
| Chorus or dance | 31.9% | 9.4% |
| Band or orchestra | 27.8% | 10.2% |
| Honorary clubs (i.e., National Honor Society) | 23.4% | 4.4% |
| School newspaper, magazine, yearbook, or annual | 23.0% | 6.5% |
| Clubs addressing issues of human rights, tolerance, and diversity, other than a Gay-Straight Alliance (i.e., Amnesty International, Diversity Club) | 19.6% | 5.9% |
| Student council, student government, or political club | 19.4% | 7.7% |
| Varsity athletic teams | 19.0% | 6.0% |
| Service organizations (i.e., SADD, Key Club) | 16.2% | 4.3% |
| Hobby clubs (i.e., model building, electronics, crafts) | 16.0% | 4.0% |
| Vocational education clubs (i.e., Future Teachers, Future Farmers, FCCLA, DECA, FBLA, VICA) | 9.7% | 3.2% |
| Ethnic or cultural clubs (i.e., ASPIRA, Asian Cultural Society, African American Student Union) | 9.1% | 2.4% |
| Cheerleaders, pep club, or majorettes | 6.3% | 2.1% |
| Junior Achievement | 5.8% | 1.5% |

LGBT students who were not out to their parents/guardians were less likely to have parental permission to participate in a GSA.

Even though the Equal Access Act⁵⁰ requires public schools to allow GSAs to exist alongside other non-curricular student clubs, opponents have continued attempts to restrict the existence of or access to these clubs. Attempting to require students to have parental permission to participate in school-based student clubs has been one tactic. For this reason, we were interested in whether requiring students to obtain permission to participate in a GSA would limit student access to these clubs. We asked students who indicated that their school had a GSA or similar club whether or

not their school required parental permission to participate in any school clubs. Less than a tenth (4.7%) of LGBT students reported that their school had this requirement and, as shown in Table 7, a majority of these students also reported that they had permission from a parent to participate in a GSA.

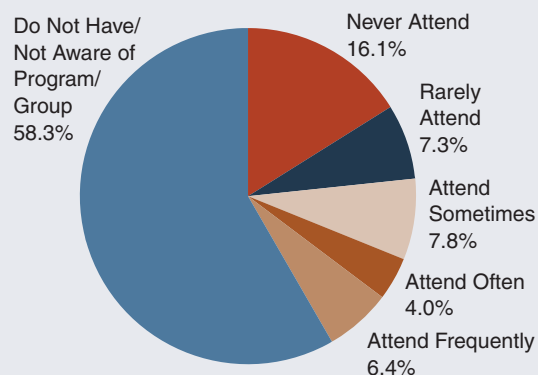
Requiring students to obtain parental permission could restrict access to GSAs for some LGBT students, particularly those who do not disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to their parents. Although a majority (62.6%) of LGBT students were out to at least one parent or guardian, over a third (37.4%) of students were not out to any parent or guardian. LGBT students who were not out to their parents/guardians were less likely to have parental permission to participate in a GSA.⁵¹ Almost three-quarters (73.3%) of students who were out to at least one parent had permission to participate in their GSA, compared to less than half (42.1%) of students who were not out to their parents. For students who are not out to their parents, parental permission requirements for student club participation could restrict their access to an important school resource.

| Table 7. Parental Permission Requirements Among Students with a GSA | |
|--|-------|
| Does your school have a require you to have parental permission to participate in the GSA? (n=3222) | |
| No, school does not require parental permission | 75.9% |
| Don't Know | 19.4% |
| Yes, school requires parental permission | 4.7% |
| Do you have parental permission? (n=140) | |
| No | 34.5% |
| Yes | 65.5% |

Insight on LGBT Community Groups or Programs

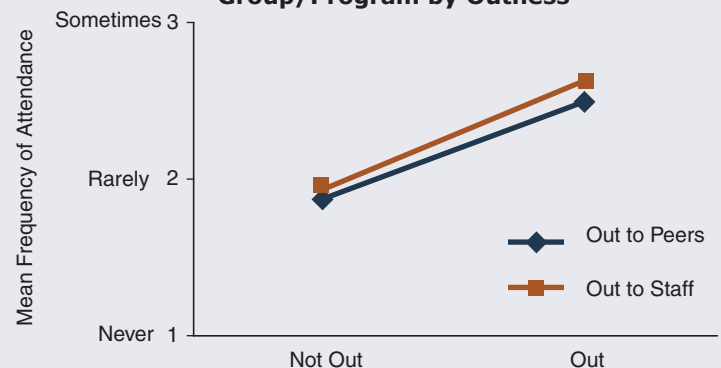
Community-based groups or programs for LGBT youth may be an important source of support for LGBT students. Youth who do not have peer supports at school, such as a club that addresses LGBT-student issues, e.g., a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), may have particular need for the support of a community-based youth group or program. Thus, we examined the availability of LGBT youth groups or programs in students' local communities. We also looked at the relationships between participating in a youth group and participating in a GSA.

Participation in LGBT Youth Community Group/Program



The majority of youth did not have or were not aware of a LGBT youth group or program in their local community. Youth in rural areas were least likely to have a youth group/program, whereas those in urban areas were most likely to have one.⁵² Youth in the South were least likely to have a group/program, and youth in the West and Northeast were most likely to have one.⁵³

Frequency of Attending LGBT Youth Community Group/Program by Outness



LGBT youth who are not out to others may be reluctant to participate in a community group/program for fear of people finding out their sexual orientation or gender identity. Students who were out to their peers and school staff were more likely to participate in an LGBT youth community group/program.⁵⁶

Relationship Between GSAs and LGBT Youth Community Groups/Programs

Students in schools that had a GSA were more likely to have an LGBT youth group/program in their community.⁵⁴ Students who attended their GSAs more often were more likely to attend a LGBT youth group/program in their community.⁵⁵

It is important that all LGBT youth have a place where they feel safe and accepted. Both LGBT youth community groups/programs and GSAs provide this safe space in the context of adult support and peer interaction. Given that students without LGBT youth groups or programs in their communities are also less likely to have an existing GSA in their schools, educators and safe school advocates should pay particular attention to supporting the origination of GSAs in areas without LGBT youth groups/programs. As communities with local supports are more likely to have GSAs in their schools, these findings also highlight the important role local community advocates may play in supporting GSAs.

In addition, LGBT students who are not out to members of the school community may be the most vulnerable and in need of support. Thus, LGBT youth community group/program leaders and GSA supporters should consider ways to make these important resources available to youth who may not be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Inclusive Curricular Resources

LGBT-related curricular resources, such as information about LGBT people and history, were not available for most students in our survey. As Figure 31 illustrates, less than half (47.4%) reported that they could find such information in their school library. In addition, only a little more than a third (39.3%) of students with Internet access at school reported being able to access LGBT-related information via school computers. Furthermore, less than a fifth (17.9%) reported that LGBT-related topics were included in textbooks or other assigned class readings.

The vast majority (86.6%) of LGBT students also reported they had not been taught anything about LGBT people, history, or events in their classes (see Figure 32). Among students who had been taught about these topics, History/Social Studies, English, and Health were the classes most often mentioned as being inclusive of these topics (see Table 8). Most students who had been taught about LGBT-related topics in class reported that the representations of LGBT people, history, and events were positive; however, given that such a small portion reported being taught anything about LGBT topics, only 11.7% of all students in the survey were exposed to positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events in their classes (see Figure 32).

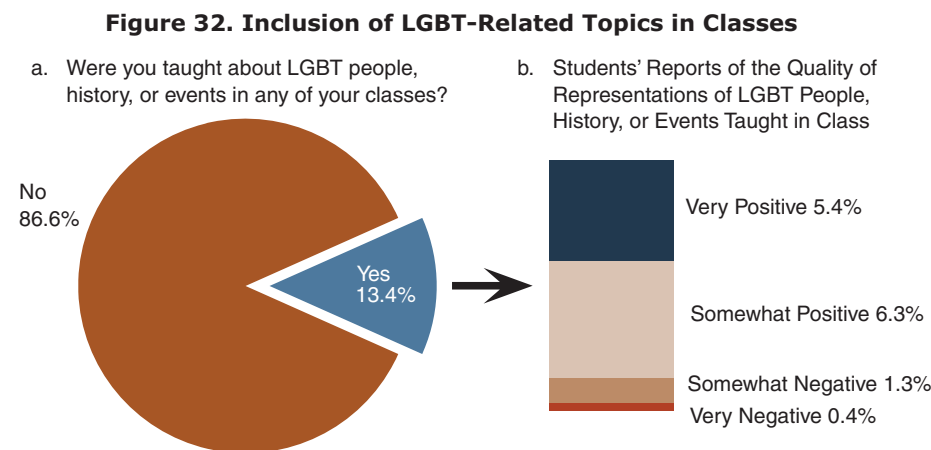


Table 8. LGBT-Related Topics Taught in Class

| Classes | % of Students Taught LGBT-Related Topics (n=970) | % of all Students in Survey (n=7235) |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| History or Social Studies | 63.0% | 8.4% |
| English | 35.5% | 4.8% |
| Health | 28.7% | 3.8% |
| Art | 10.9% | 1.5% |
| Science | 7.4% | 1.0% |
| Foreign Language | 6.9% | 0.9% |
| Gym or Physical Education | 4.2% | 0.6% |
| Music | 3.2% | 0.4% |
| Math | 1.8% | 0.2% |
| Other Class (e.g., Sociology, Psychology) | 19.1% | 2.6% |

Supportive School Personnel

Supportive teachers, principals, and other school staff serve as another important resource for LGBT students. Being able to speak with a caring adult in school may have a significant positive impact on the school experiences for students, particularly for those who feel marginalized or experience harassment. In our study, almost all students (94.5%) could identify at least one school staff member whom they believed was supportive of LGBT students at their school, and more than half (53.4%) could identify six or more supportive school staff (see Figure 33).

As the leaders of the school, school administrators play a particularly important role in the school experiences of LGBT youth. They may serve not only as caring adults to whom youth can turn, but they also set the tone of the school and determine specific policies and programs that may affect the school's climate, either positively or negatively. Approximately one in three students (29.3%) reported that their school administration (e.g. principal, vice-principal) was supportive of LGBT students, and a third (33.0%) said their administration was unsupportive (see Figure 34).

The presence of LGBT school personnel who are out or open at school about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity may provide another source of support for LGBT students. In addition, the number of out LGBT personnel may provide a visible sign of a more supportive and accepting school climate. Yet less than half (43.0%) of students said they could identify any openly LGBT personnel at their school (see Figure 35).

When asked about their level of comfort talking one-on-one with various school personnel about LGBT-related issues, students reported that they would be most comfortable talking with school-based mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, social workers, or psychologists) and teachers⁵⁷ — over half (58.2%) reported that they would be somewhat or very comfortable talking with a school-based mental health professionals and a slightly smaller number (52.8%) with a teacher about LGBT issues (see Figure 36). Additionally, almost a third (30.8%) said that they would be comfortable talking with a school nurse or other medical professional at school. Slightly fewer students in our study said they would feel comfortable talking one-on-one with a principal or

vice/assistant principal, or school librarian about these issues.

In addition to comfort level, students were asked how frequently in the past school year they had actually spoken with various school personnel about LGBT-related issues. Given that students reported feeling most comfortable with teachers and school-based mental health professionals, it is not surprising that they were more likely to speak with these individuals than other school staff.⁵⁸ However, as shown in Figure 37, students were more likely to have actually spoken with a teacher (65.9%) than a school-based mental health professional (40.9%) even though their comfort level with mental health professionals was somewhat higher. This finding is not surprising given that students usually spend more time interacting with teachers than school-based mental health professionals. Students were much less likely to report having talked about LGBT issues with principals, vice/assistant principals, or other school personnel.

Figure 33. Number of Teachers and Other School Staff Who are Supportive of LGBT Students

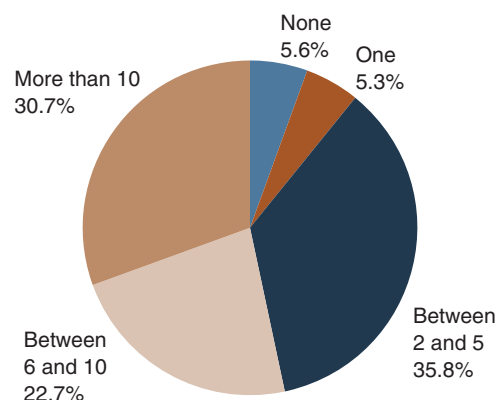


Figure 34. Students' Perceptions of the Supportiveness of School Administration of LGBT Students

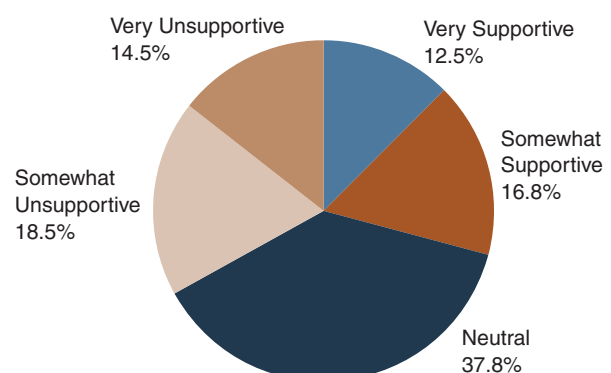


Figure 35. Number of Openly LGBT Teachers or Other School Staff

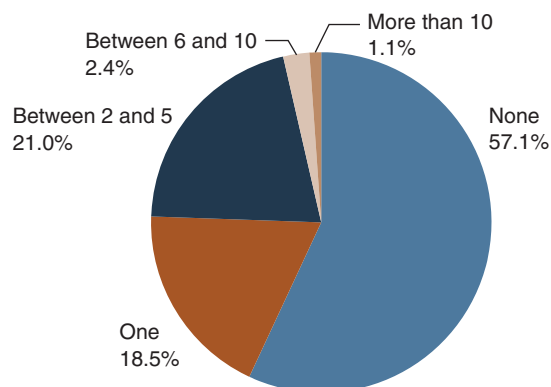


Figure 36. Comfort Talking with School Personnel about LGBT Issues

(percentage of students reporting that they would be "somewhat comfortable" or "very comfortable")

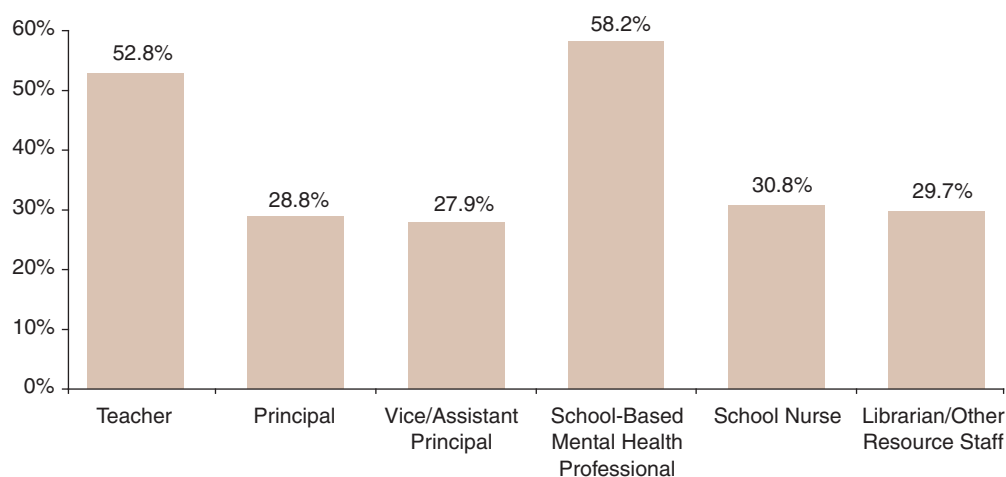
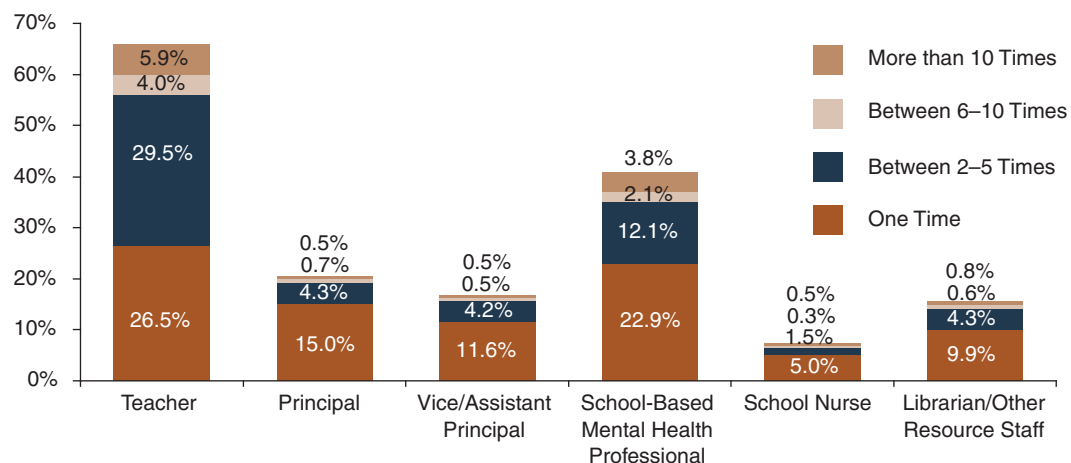


Figure 37. Frequency of Students Speaking to School Staff about LGBT Issues



School Policies for Addressing Harassment and Assault

School policies that address in-school harassment and assault are imperative for creating school environments where students feel safe. Comprehensive policies explicitly state protection based on personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, among others. When a school has and enforces a comprehensive policy, one that also includes procedures for reporting incidents to school authorities, it can send a message that harassment and assault are unacceptable. It can also communicate that student safety, including the safety of LGBT students, is taken seriously by school administrators. “Generic” bullying or harassment school policies do not include enumerated categories or specify the various types of harassment that are unacceptable. Comprehensive school policies can provide

students with greater protection against harassment and assault because they make clear the various forms of harassment and assault that will not be tolerated.

Students in our survey were asked whether their school had a policy or procedure for reporting incidents of in-school harassment or assault, and if that policy explicitly included sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. As shown in Table 9, nearly half (42.5%) of students reported that their school did not have a policy or that they did not know if their school had a policy. A little more than half reported that their school had a policy, but among those students, few said that their school's policy included sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Thus, only about a fifth (18.2%) of all students in our study reported that their school had a comprehensive policy that specifically mentioned sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression (see also Table 9).

Table 9. Students’ Reports Regarding School Policies for Reporting Harassment and Assault

| | |
|---|-------|
| No Policy ^a | 42.5% |
| Any Policy | 57.5% |
| Generic Policy ^b | 39.3% |
| Comprehensive Policy | 18.2% |
| <i>Sexual Orientation Only</i> | 9.7% |
| <i>Gender Identity/Expression Only</i> | 1.7% |
| <i>Both Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity/Expression</i> | 6.8% |

^a Includes students who indicated that they did not know if there was a policy or not.

^b Includes students who indicated that they did not know if the policy included specific enumeration.

Utility of School Resources and Supports

Key Findings

LGBT students experienced a safer, more positive school environment when:

- Their school had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student club;
- They were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events through their school curriculum;
- They had supportive school staff who frequently intervened in biased remarks and effectively responded to reports of harassment and assault; their school administration was supportive of LGBT students;
- Their school had a comprehensive harassment/assault policy that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression); and
- Their school was in a state with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment law that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

In addition to documenting whether or not schools have institutional supports for LGBT students, such as supportive educators and inclusive curricula, it is also important to examine how such institutional supports may benefit students. We examined whether there were relationships between students' reports of the availability of institutional supports and their access to education (i.e., whether or not they missed school due to safety concerns), academic achievement, educational aspirations, and overall school climate.

Supportive Student Clubs

Student clubs that address LGBT student issues can create safer and more inclusive schools by addressing anti-LGBT harassment and promoting respect for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Attending a school that had a GSA was related to a more positive school climate for LGBT students in our survey:

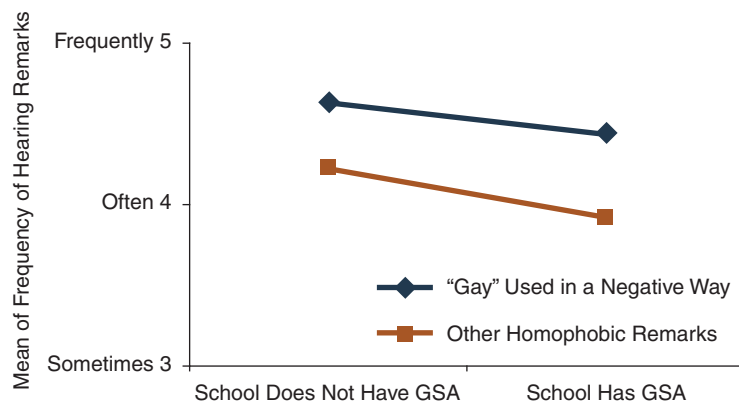
- Students in schools with a GSA heard fewer homophobic remarks, such as “faggot” or “dyke,” and fewer expressions where “gay” was used in a negative way, such as “that’s so gay,” than students in schools without GSAs.⁵⁹
- Students with a GSA (see Figure 38) were somewhat more likely to report that school personnel intervened when hearing homophobic remarks — 19.0% of those with a GSA said that staff intervened most of the time or always when hearing homophobic remarks, versus 12.3% of students in schools without a GSA.⁶⁰

- LGBT students with a GSA were less likely to report feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender expression than those without a GSA.⁶¹ For example, about 54.3% of students with a GSA felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, compared to 66.5% of other students (see Figure 39).
- LGBT students in schools with a GSA were less likely to experience victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression.⁶² For example, 24.2% of students with a GSA experienced high levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation, compared to 34.7% of those without a GSA (see Figure 40).

The mere presence of a GSA may demonstrate a school's commitment to LGBT students and may allow these students to feel a stronger connection to the school community. We examined the relationship between students' sense of school belonging and the availability of a GSA and found that students with a GSA reported higher levels of school belonging than students without a GSA.⁶³ A sense of belonging or being connected to one's school community may help to create a more positive educational experience. Having a GSA was, in fact, related to school attendance: about a quarter (25.5%) of students in schools with a GSA missed at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, compared to a third (33.4%) of those in schools without a GSA (see Figure 39).⁶⁴

As all school-based GSAs must have a faculty advisor, students in schools with a GSA should

Figure 38. Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks



have at least one staff member supportive of LGBT students. Students with a GSA were more likely to report that they had many supportive staff available to them at school (71.2%) than students without a GSA (39.0%; see Figure 41).⁶⁵

This relationship could explain, in part, why LGBT students with access to a GSA were somewhat more likely than those without a GSA to say that they reported incidents to school staff “most of the time” or “always” (15.0% vs. 12.4%).⁶⁶

Figure 39. Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Feelings of Safety and Missing School

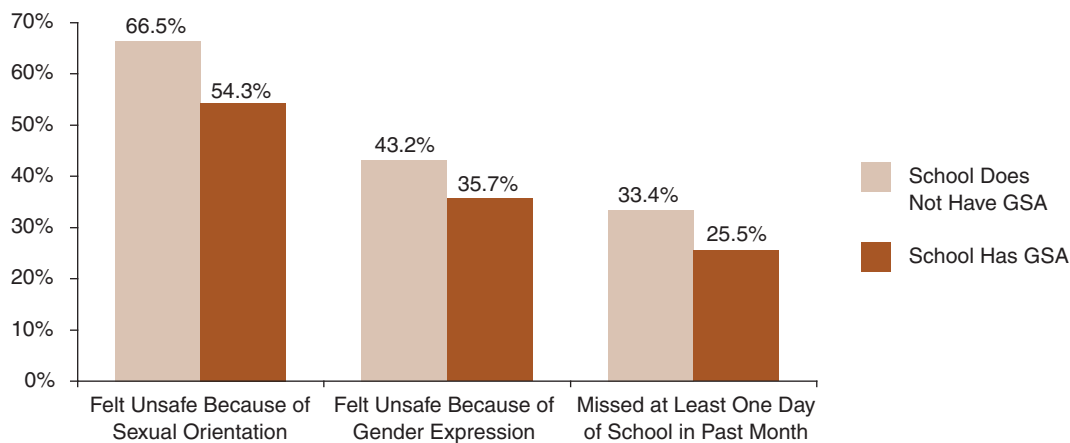


Figure 40. Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Victimization

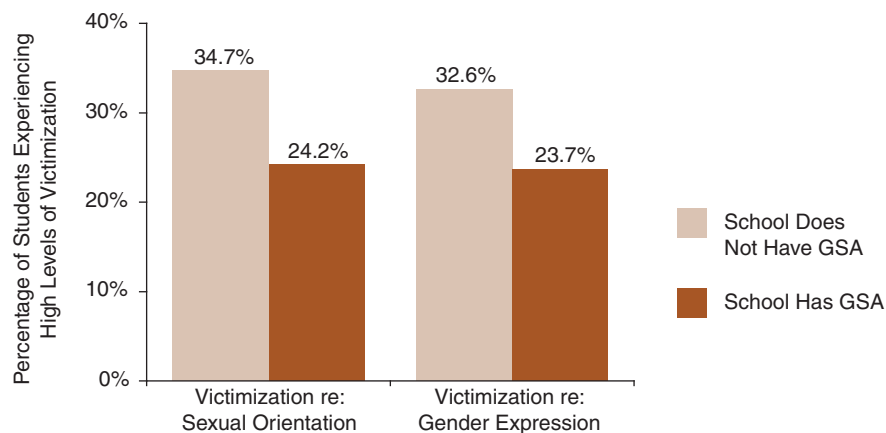
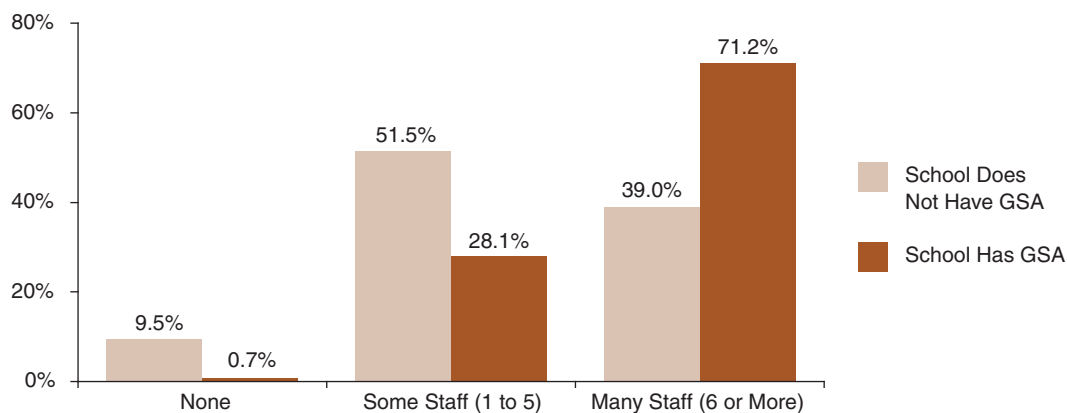


Figure 41. Presence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Supportive School Staff



Inclusive Curriculum

Many experts in multicultural education believe that curriculum that is inclusive of diverse groups promotes respect and equity for all, regardless of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, in that it enforces the belief in the intrinsic worth of all individuals and the value of diversity.⁶⁷ Including positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events in the curriculum may promote a general tone of acceptance of LGBT people and increased awareness of LGBT-related issues, resulting in a more positive school climate for LGBT students. Among the LGBT students in this study, attending a school that had positive representations of LGBT topics in the curriculum was related to a less hostile school climate.

LGBT students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were less likely to:

- Report hearing homophobic remarks, including negative use of the word “gay,” the phrase “no homo,” homophobic epithets, and negative comments about someone’s gender expression (see Figure 42);⁶⁸
- Report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and gender expression.⁶⁹ For example, less than half (42.1%) of LGBT students in schools with inclusive curricula felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, compared to almost two-thirds (63.6%) of students in schools without this resource (see Figure 43); and
- Experience victimization at school based on their sexual orientation or gender expression (see Figure 44).⁷⁰

Figure 42. Inclusive Curriculum and Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks

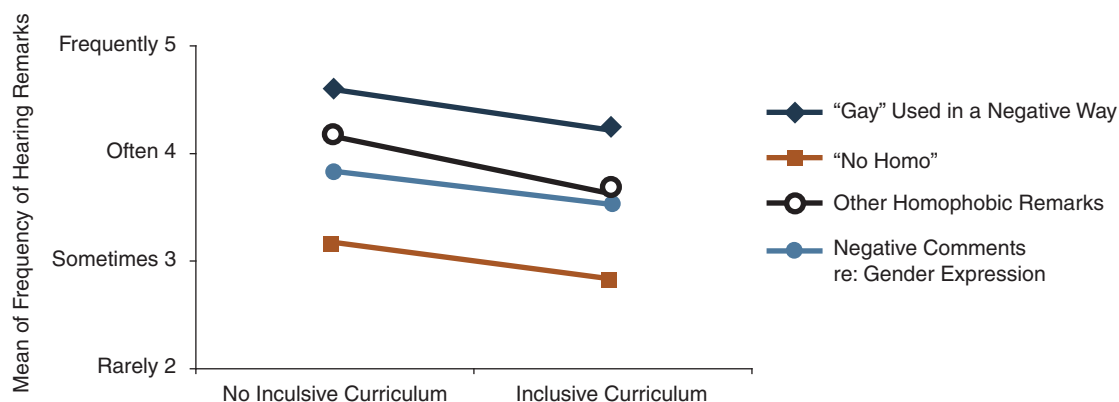
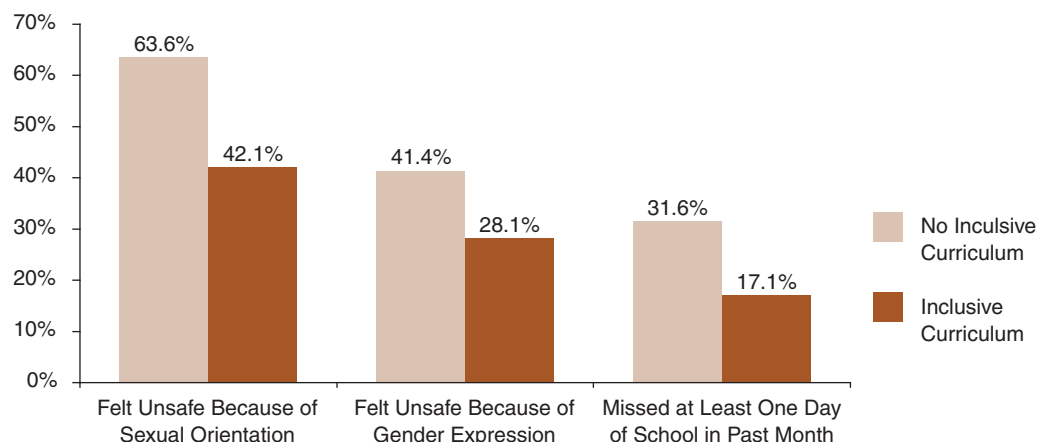


Figure 43. Inclusive Curriculum and Safety and Missing School



Students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were also more likely to report that school personnel and their peers intervened in homophobic remarks.⁷¹ For example, students were more than twice as likely to say that staff intervened “most of the time” or “always” when hearing homophobic remarks when they had an inclusive curriculum at school (see Figure 45).

Given that inclusive curriculum was related to greater feelings of safety, it is not surprising that students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were less likely to report missing school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.⁷² Less than a fifth (17.1%) of LGBT students with inclusive curricula reported missing school in the past month compared to almost a third (31.6%) of other students (see also Figure 43).

In addition to fostering a safer school environment, the inclusion of positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events in class curricula may help promote a more inclusive climate for LGBT students. We found that students in schools with an inclusive curriculum had a greater sense of connectedness to their school community than other students.⁷³

When educators include LGBT-related content in their curriculum, they may also be sending a message that they are open to discussing LGBT-related issues. We examined the relationship between having an inclusive curriculum and students’ comfort level talking with teachers about LGBT issues, the number of times students actually talked with teachers about these issues, and the quality of their interactions when talking

Figure 44. Inclusive Curriculum and Victimization

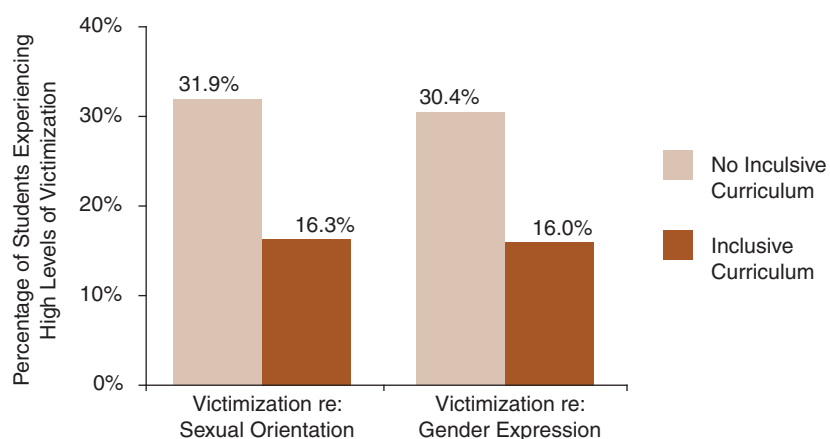
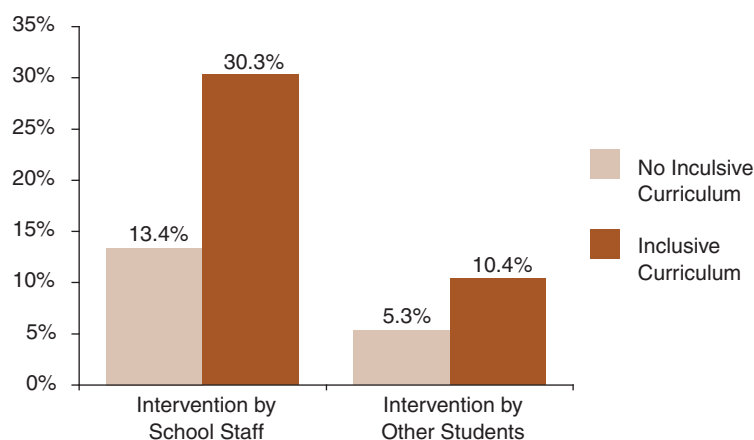


Figure 45. Inclusive Curriculum and Intervention with Homophobic Remarks

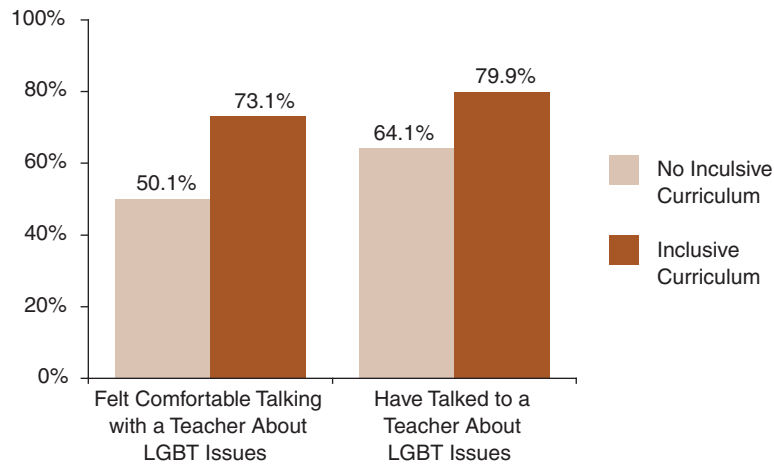
(percentage of students reporting that intervention occurred “most of the time” or “always”)



about these issues with teachers. We found that students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were more comfortable talking with teachers about LGBT issues and had talked with their teachers about these issues more often.^{74,75} For example,

as shown in Figure 46, almost three-quarters (73.1%) of students with inclusive curricula in school felt comfortable talking to a teacher about LGBT-related issues, compared to half (50.1%) of students without this resource in school.

Figure 46. Inclusive Curriculum and Talking with Teachers About LGBT Issues

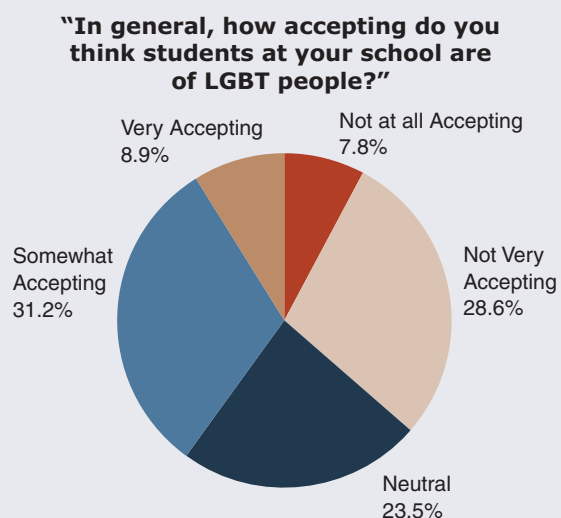


Insight on Peer Acceptance of LGBT People

Attending a school where the general student body has an accepting attitude toward LGBT people may positively affect the experiences of LGBT youth by helping to create an environment where students feel welcomed and respected regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, and are treated as a valued member of their school. In our survey, we asked students how accepting they believed their peers were of LGBT people. More than a third (36.4%) of students felt that their peers were not accepting of LGBT people. A slightly larger percentage (40.1%) felt that their peers were somewhat or very accepting.

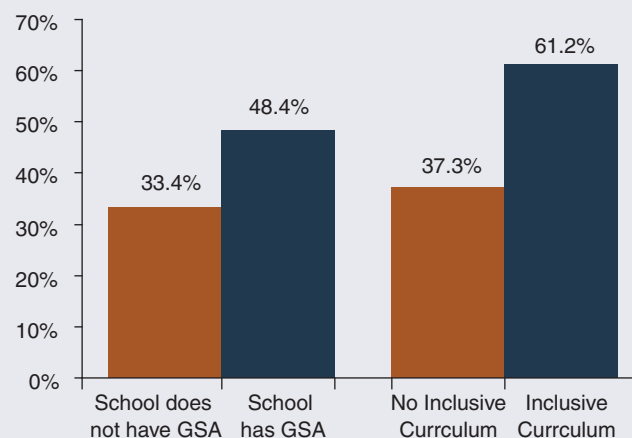
Peer Acceptance & Comfort. Having accepting peers may allow LGBT students to feel more comfortable and to be themselves at school. We found that LGBT students who believed that their peers were accepting of LGBT people were more likely to be out to other students at school about their sexual orientation or gender identity: 76.2% of students who said their classmates were accepting of LGBT people were out about their own sexual orientation or gender identity to most or all of their classmates, compared to 56.6% of those who felt their peers were not accepting.⁷⁶ Having accepting peers at school was also related to a greater overall sense of belonging to the school community.⁷⁷

LGBT-Related Resources & Peer Acceptance. Gay-Straight Alliances are often spaces where students can collectively organize to challenge anti-LGBT harassment and discriminatory school policies and practices, and educate their peers about these issues through school-wide events such as the National Day of Silence. The inclusion of positive portrayals of LGBT people, history, and events in classroom curriculum can educate students about LGBT issues and help to reduce prejudice and intolerance of LGBT people. Such activities may help to cultivate greater respect and acceptance of LGBT people among the student body, which in turn can foster a more positive school climate for LGBT students. As shown in the figure, students at schools with a GSA and LGBT-inclusive curriculum were indeed more likely to report that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBT people compared to those without these resources.^{78,79}



Presence of GSA and Inclusive Curriculum and Peer Acceptance of LGBT People

(percentage of students reporting that their peers were somewhat or very accepting)



These results suggest that LGBT-inclusive curriculum and GSAs may help students to become more accepting of LGBT people and, by extension, more accepting of their LGBT classmates. Educating students to respect all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, is a key component of creating safer and more affirming schools for LGBT youth.

Supportive School Personnel

In general, having supportive teachers and school staff can have a positive effect on the educational experiences of any student.⁸⁰ Given that LGBT students often feel unsafe in school, having access to school staff who provide support to LGBT students may be critical for creating safer learning environments. In this report, we examined the relationships between the presence of supportive school staff and various indicators of school climate and found that the presence of school staff supportive of LGBT students is one critical piece toward improving school climate.

School Safety and Absenteeism. The more supportive school staff that students were able to identify, the less likely they were to report feeling unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation or how they expressed their gender.⁸¹ For example, as shown in Figure 47, about half (51.5%) of students who had many (six or more) supportive staff at their school said that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, compared to nearly three-fourths (73.7%) of those with no supportive staff.

Having a greater number of supportive school personnel was also related to missing fewer days of school due to safety concerns.⁸² For example, nearly half (48.9%) of LGBT students with no supportive staff reported missing school in the past month compared to a less than a quarter (21.6%) of students with many supportive staff (see Figure 47).

Achievement, Aspirations, and School Belonging.

Given that the presence of supportive educators was related to less absenteeism due to safety reasons, it is not surprising that having a greater number of supportive educators was also related to better educational outcomes:

- LGBT students with greater numbers of supportive staff had a greater sense of belonging or being a part of their school community than other students (see Figure 48).⁸³
- Students with greater numbers of supportive staff reported receiving higher grades than other students — the mean grade point average of students who had many supportive teachers or other staff was almost half a grade higher than those who did not have any supportive staff (3.1 versus 2.7; see Figure 49).⁸⁴
- A greater number of educators supportive of LGBT students was also associated with higher educational aspirations — 8.0% of students with many supportive educators reported not planning on attending college versus 19.5% with no supportive educators (see Figure 50).⁸⁵

Responding to Anti-LGBT Bias and Victimization.

The overarching goals of staff intervention are to protect students, prevent future victimization, and demonstrate to the student body that such actions will not be tolerated. Students who observed staff intervening frequently in biased remarks felt safer at school and were less likely to miss school because of safety reasons. As shown

Figure 47. Feelings of Safety and Missing School and Number of Supportive School Staff

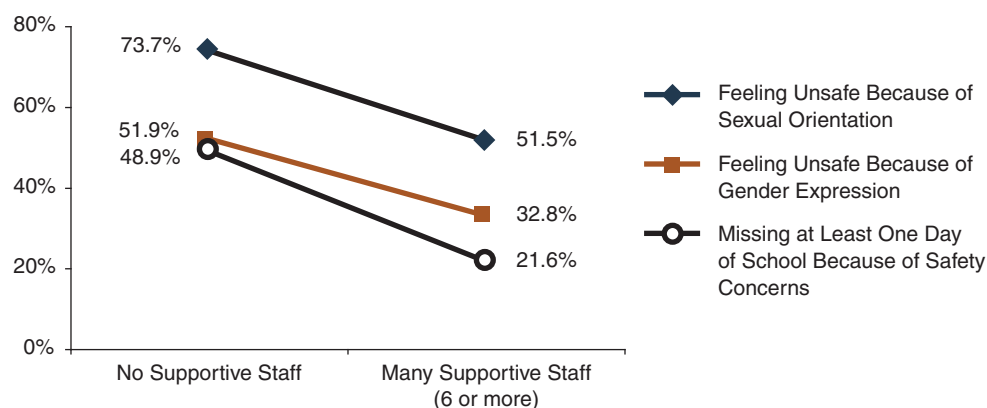


Figure 48. School Belonging and Number of Supportive School Staff

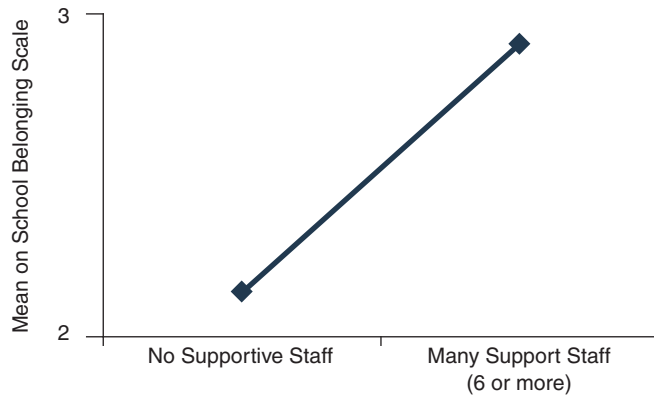


Figure 49. Academic Achievement and Number of Supportive School Staff

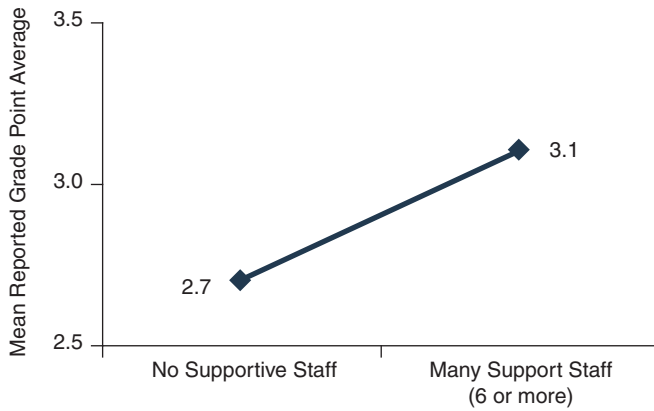
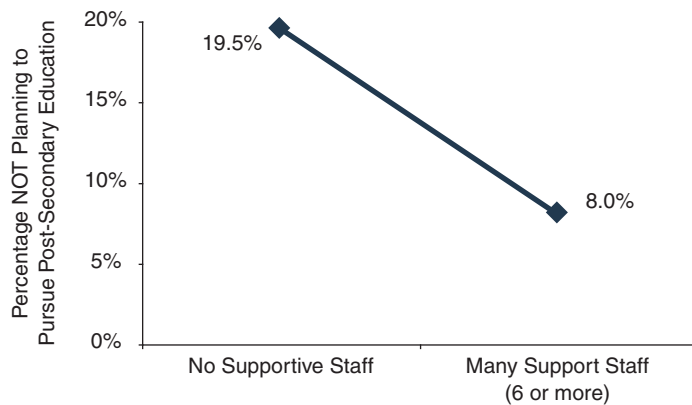


Figure 50. Educational Aspirations and Number of Supportive School Staff



in Figure 51, approximately half (51.1%) of LGBT students who reported that staff intervened most of the time or always when hearing homophobic remarks felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, compared to 70.5% of students who reported that staff never intervened or only intervened some of the time.⁸⁶ Figure 52 shows the relationship between staff intervention and missing school. For example, just over a third (36.7%) of students with staff who intervened in homophobic remarks most of the time or always missed at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable compared to almost three-quarters (72.5%) of students with staff who never intervened or only intervened some of the time (see Figure 52).⁸⁷

We also examined whether or not students' reports on the effectiveness of staff intervention were related to the incidence of harassment or assault in school. As shown in Figure 53, when students believed that staff effectively addressed harassment and assault, they were less likely to feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression⁸⁸ and less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.⁸⁹ For example, over half (52.3%) of students who found staff's intervention to be ineffective missed at least one day of school in the past month due to safety concerns, whereas less than a third (30.9%) of students who said staff's intervention was effective missed school.

Figure 51. Feelings of Safety in School and Staff Intervention in Biased Remarks

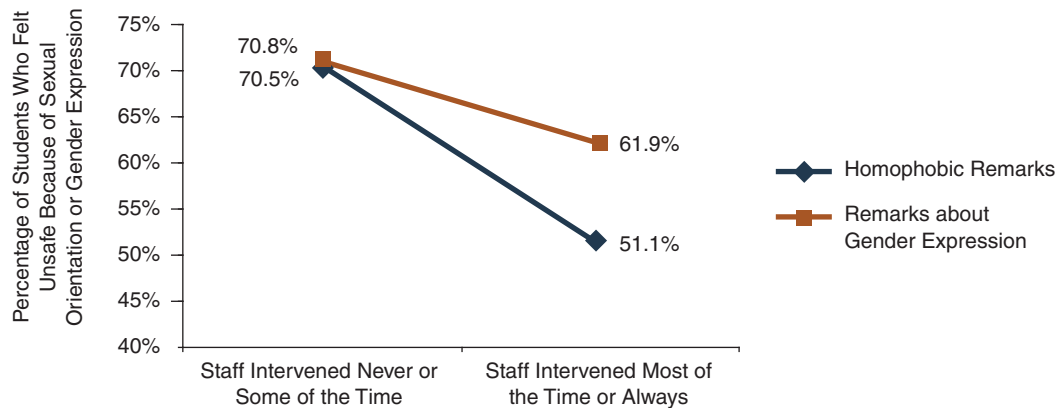
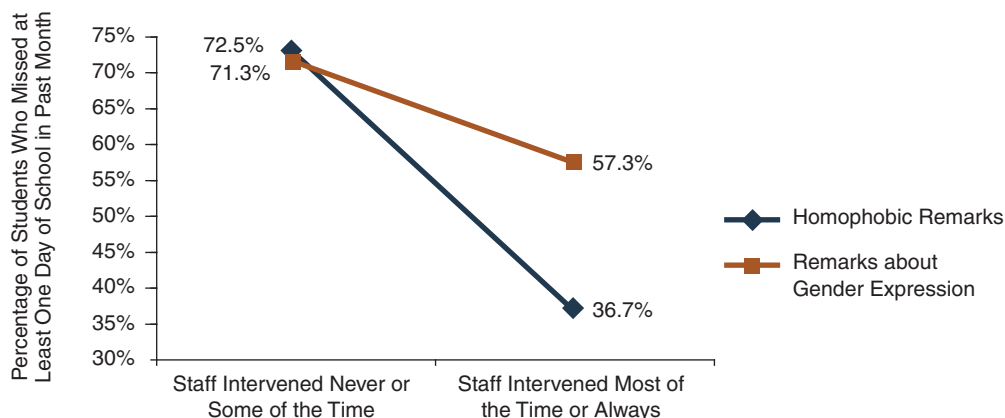


Figure 52. Missing School Because of Safety Concerns and Staff Intervention in Biased Remarks



Students who continually report harassment to school authorities and repeatedly find that nothing is done to improve the situation may feel they have no other choice but to stop going to school. These findings demonstrate how clear and appropriate actions need to be taken by school personnel in response to harassment and assault of LGBT students. Effective responses to harassment

and assault may also serve to deter future acts of victimization. In fact, students who said that school staff effectively addressed the situation when learning about an incident of harassment or assault reported experiencing lower levels of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression (see Figure 54).⁹⁰

Figure 53. Feelings of Safety in School and Missing School Because of Safety Concerns by Effectiveness of Reporting to School Staff

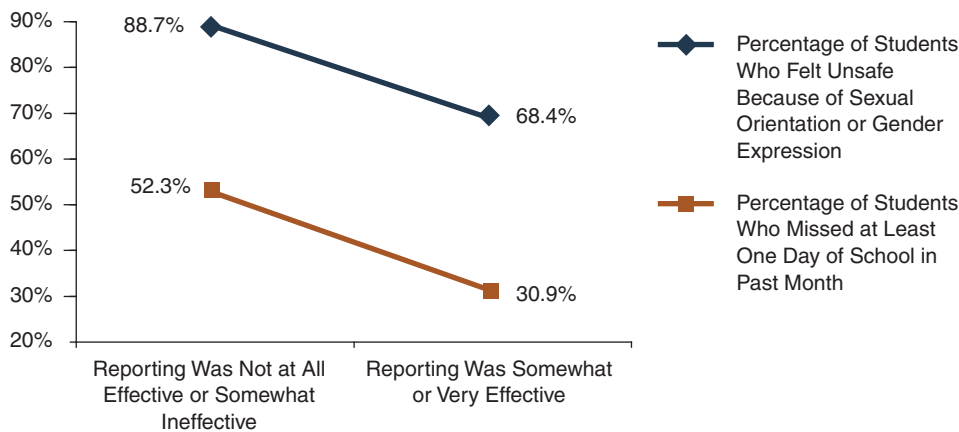
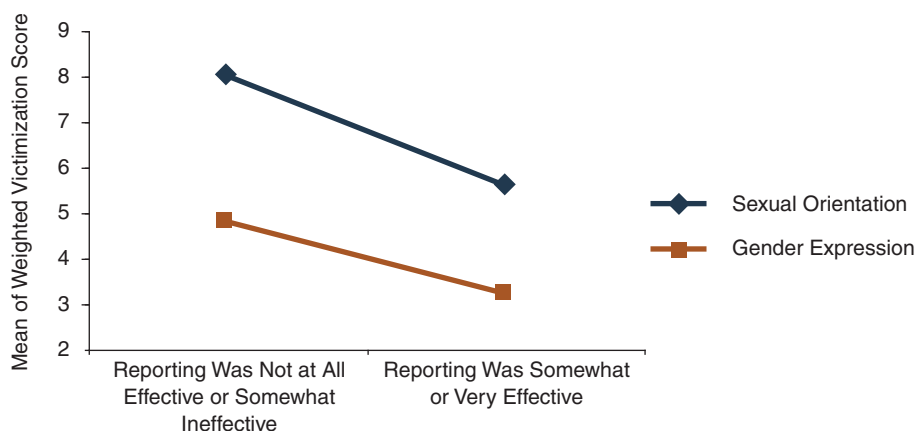
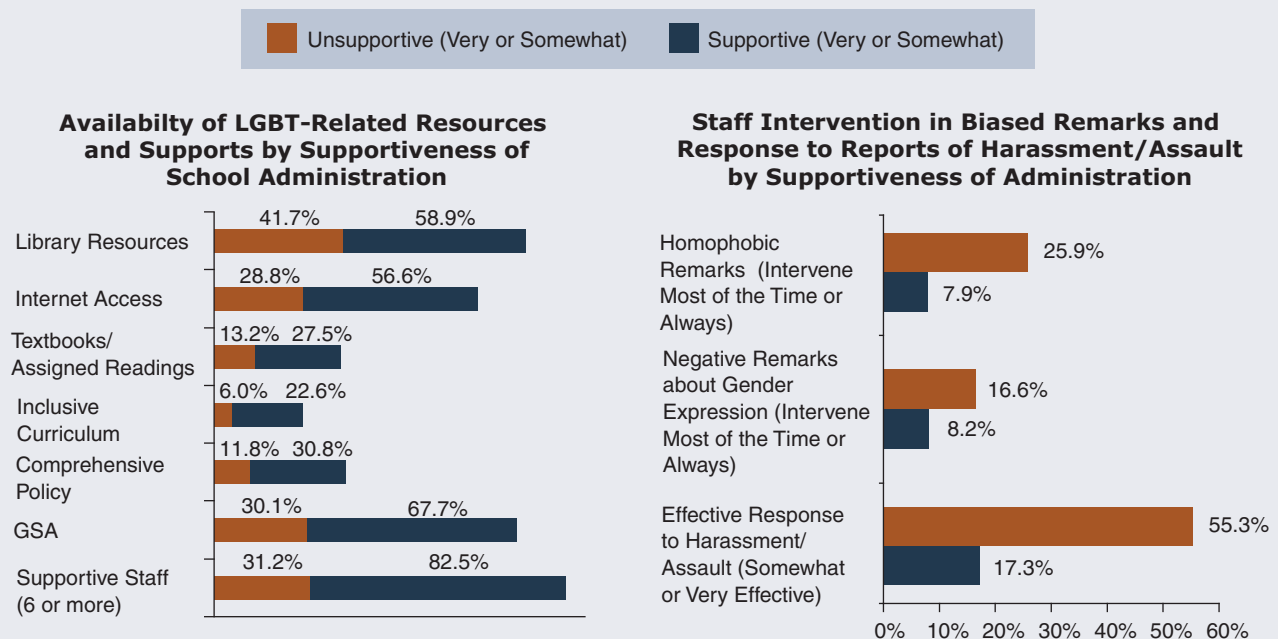


Figure 54. Experiences of Victimization by Effectiveness of Reporting to School Staff



Insight on School Administrations

Having the support of the school administration can make a difference in LGBT youth's school experiences. Administrations that are supportive of LGBT students may be more likely to implement policies and practices that improve school climate. In addition, a school's administration may set the tone for how LGBT students should be treated in school, both through their personal interactions with LGBT students and their expectations for how other members of the school community treat LGBT issues.



Students with supportive school administrations were more likely to report having valuable LGBT-related resources in their schools.⁹¹

LGBT students with supportive school administrations reported that school staff intervened more often when hearing homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression.

These students also said that staff's responses to incidents of harassment and assault were more effective.⁹²

Supportiveness of School Administration and Relationship to School

LGBT students with supportive school administrations were less likely to miss school or skip classes for safety reasons, and had a greater sense of belonging or being part of their school community.⁹³

School administrators are role models in their school community and can affect the whole school environments by addressing anti-LGBT bias and victimization, demonstrating support for LGBT youth, and implementing supportive resources. In addition, a supportive administration can have a positive impact on the LGBT student experience above and beyond implementation of school supports. Pre- and in-service school administrators should be provided with training and professional development opportunities about addressing these issues in schools.

School Policies for Reporting Harassment and Assault

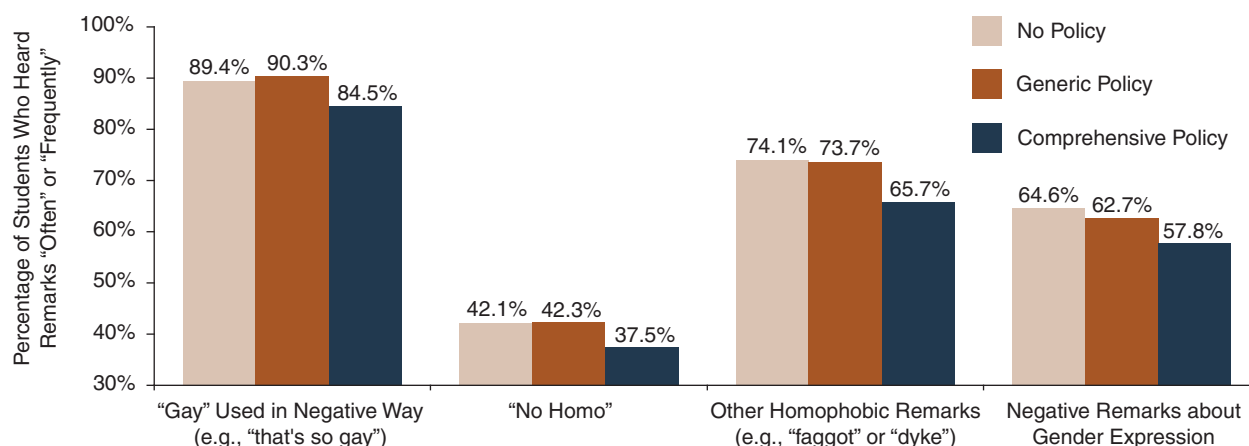
GLSEN believes that all schools should have comprehensive harassment/assault policies that protect all students, and that the most effective policies are those that include enumerated categories explicitly stating protection based on personal characteristics including sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Comprehensive school policies may provide students with a greater degree of protection against various types of victimization and other negative experiences in school than generic harassment/assault policies (i.e., policies that do not explicitly state protection based on personal characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender identity/expression). Thus, we examined whether having a comprehensive school policy was related to students' reports of hearing biased language, their sense of safety, and their experiences of victimization. Comprehensive harassment/assault policies may also provide school staff with the guidance needed for them to appropriately intervene when hearing students use biased language and when students report incidents of harassment and assault. For this reason, we also examined whether having a comprehensive policy was related to reported staff intervention.

Although homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression were commonly heard in students' schools overall, those who attended schools that had comprehensive harassment/assault policies reported a lower

incidence of biased remarks than other students, specifically homophobic remarks (all three types: "gay" used in a negative way, "no homo," and other homophobic remarks) and negative remarks about gender expression.⁹⁴ For example, as shown in Figure 55, about two-thirds (65.7%) of students in schools with comprehensive policies reported hearing other homophobic remarks often or frequently, compared to almost three-quarters of students in schools with generic policies (73.7%) or no policy whatsoever (74.1%). Whereas students in schools with generic policies were less likely to report hearing negative remarks about gender expression than students in schools with no policies, there were no significant differences in reports of hearing all types of homophobic remarks between students at schools with a generic policy and those at schools with no policy whatsoever. We also found that compared to both students in schools with a generic policy and those with no policy, students in schools with comprehensive policies were more likely to report that staff intervened when homophobic remarks or negative remarks about gender expression were made (see Figure 56).⁹⁵

LGBT students in schools with a comprehensive policy also experienced significantly lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression, compared to students in schools with no policy and students in schools with a generic policy (see Figure 57).⁹⁶ Although students did not often tell school authorities when they had been harassed or assaulted in school, having a comprehensive school policy increased the likelihood of reporting incidents — among

Figure 55. Biased Remarks by Type of Harassment/Assault Policy



students who had been harassed or assaulted in school in the past year, those in schools with a comprehensive policy reported these incidents more often than students in schools with a generic policy or no policy at all (see Figure 58).⁹⁷

Students in schools with a comprehensive policy also reported that school staff were more effective in addressing harassment or assault than students in schools with a generic policy or in schools with no policy (see Figure 58).⁹⁸

Figure 56. Staff Intervention with Biased Remarks by Type of School Harassment/Assault Policy

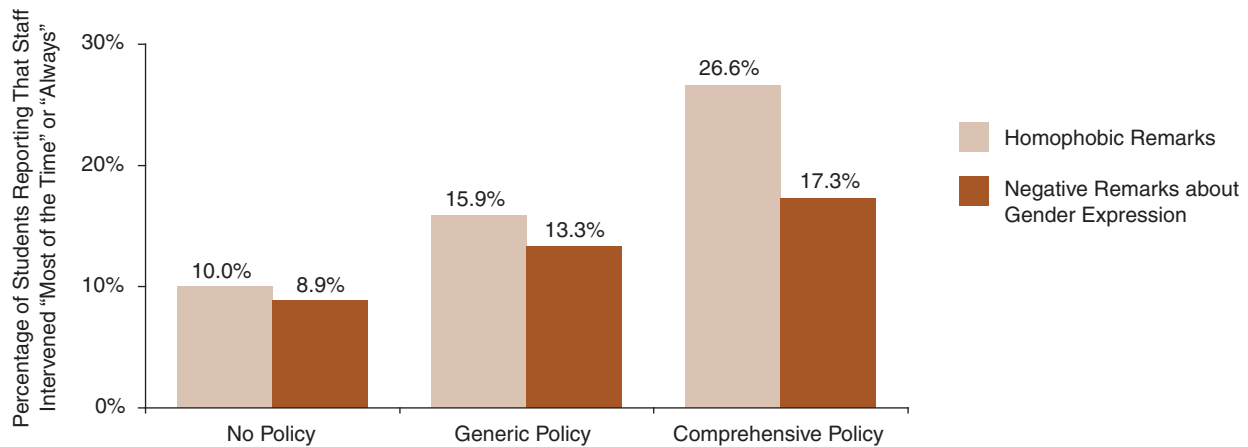


Figure 57. Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression by Type of Harassment/Assault Policy

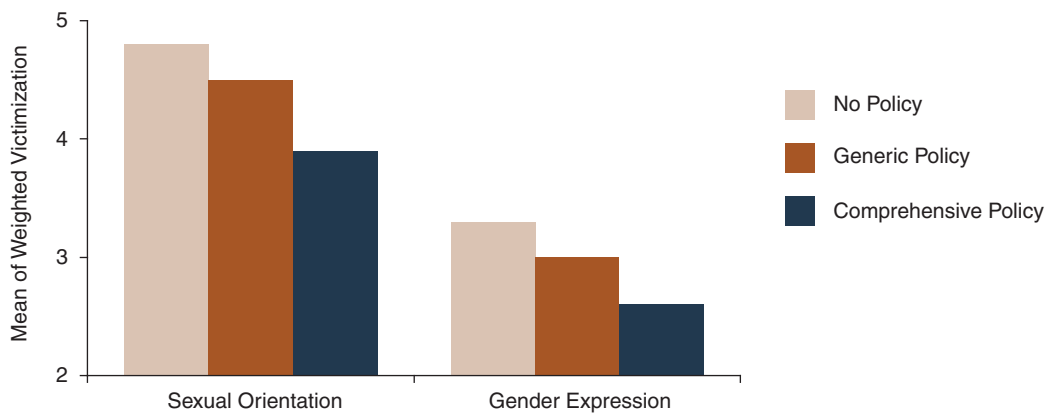
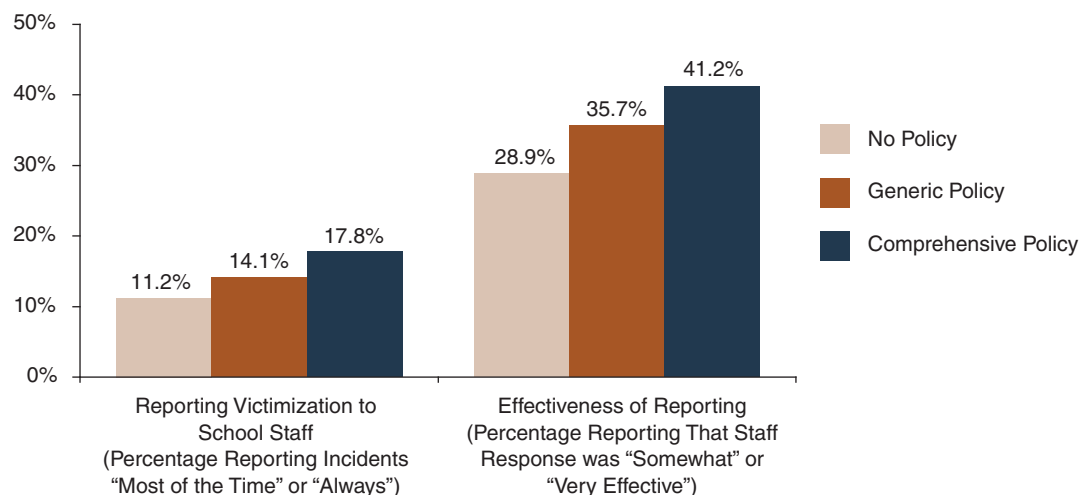


Figure 58. Reporting of Incidents and Effectiveness of Reporting by Type of Harassment/Assault Policy



State Anti-Bullying/Harassment Legislation

Along with school-level harassment/assault policies, state-level laws that specifically address bullying and harassment in schools may add further protections regarding student safety. For students who are harassed or assaulted because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, added protections from these laws may only result when sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression are explicitly included along with other enumerated categories of protection, such as race/ethnicity, national origin, and religion. These laws are often referred to as comprehensive laws, enumerated laws, or safe schools laws. Laws without specifically enumerated categories of protection are often referred to as generic laws.

In 2007, the time of the last National School Climate Survey report, only about half of U.S. states had any type of school anti-bullying/harassment legislation⁹⁹ enacted and most of the state laws were not comprehensive, i.e., they did not include specific protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. However, since that time, there has been a great deal of state legislative changes in this arena, and now most states have passed some type of anti-bullying/harassment law — 28 states have generic laws, 15 states plus the District of Columbia prohibit discrimination or harassment in schools on

the basis of sexual orientation, most of which also include protections on the basis of gender identity/expression.¹⁰⁰

Many safe schools advocates believe that generic anti-bullying/harassment laws are insufficient in protecting students from bullying, harassment, and discrimination in schools because they are too vague and do not provide teachers and administrators with clear legal guidance. Proponents of generic laws often argue that enumerated categories do not necessarily provide any extra protection and are not necessary for protective safe schools legislation.

We examined whether there were differences in students' reports of hearing homophobic remarks and hearing negative remarks about gender expression, staff intervention in these remarks, and being harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression based on the presence and type of statewide anti-bullying/harassment legislation.^{101,102} Figure 59 shows the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks by state law type. Students who lived in states with a comprehensive law reported hearing all three types of homophobic remarks significantly less often than students in states with no law or only a generic law. Furthermore, there were no differences between the students in states with no law or states with a generic law.¹⁰³ We saw this same pattern in the frequency of hearing negative remarks about gender expression — students from

states with comprehensive laws reported a lower frequency of these remarks than students from the other two state groups, and students in states with generic laws were not different than students in states with no law (see also Figure 59).¹⁰⁴

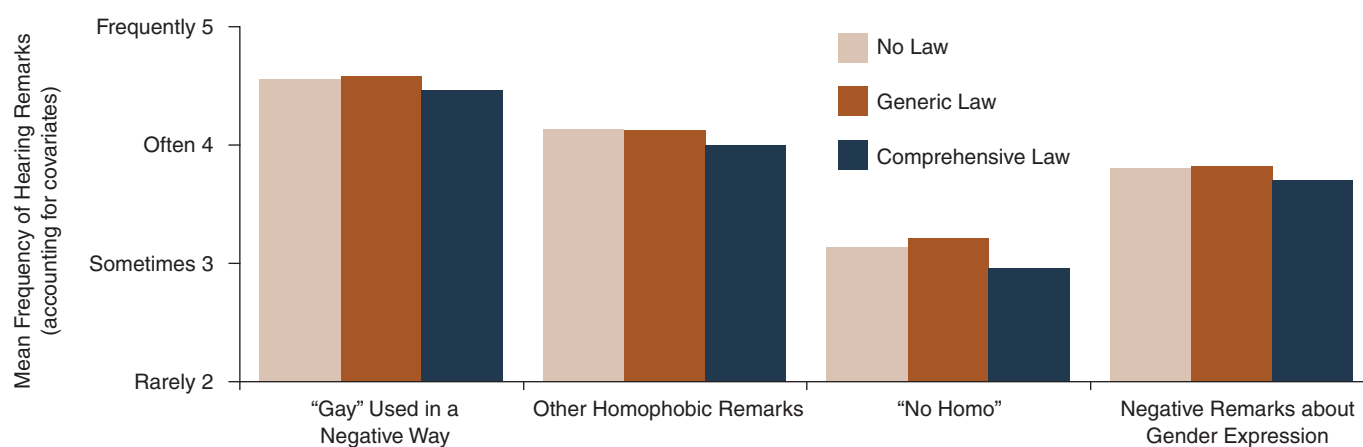
With regard to staff intervention in biased remarks, there was a significant difference in the frequency of intervention in homophobic remarks but not in remarks about gender expression. Students from states with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment laws reported a higher frequency of staff intervention in homophobic remarks with no appreciable differences between students from states with no laws and those from states with generic laws (see Figure 60).¹⁰⁵

Figure 61 shows the level of victimization by state law group for both sexual orientation and gender expression. Students from states with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment laws reported significantly lower levels of victimization based on sexual orientation than students from states with generic laws, and marginally lower levels than students in states with no laws. As we saw with frequency of homophobic remarks, there was no significant difference between the generic law and no law groups.¹⁰⁶ There were negligible differences across state law groups with regard to levels of victimization based on gender expression.¹⁰⁷

There were also important differences by the type of state anti-bullying/harassment law with regard to in-school supports for LGBT students. Figure 62 shows the percentages of students reporting having GSAs, supportive school personnel, and a comprehensive harassment/assault policy in their school. LGBT students in states with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment law reported more school supports than all other students, and students from states with generic laws were no better off than students from states with no law:

- Over half (60.1%) of students in states with comprehensive laws had a GSA in their school compared to a little over a third of students in states with no laws (37.6%) and of those in generic law states (36.8%).¹⁰⁸
- Nearly two-thirds (61.0%) of students from comprehensive law states had a high number of supportive school personnel (6 or more) compared to half of those in generic law states (49.6%) and in no law states (50.6%).¹⁰⁹
- A quarter (26.3%) of students with comprehensive laws had a comprehensive harassment/assault policy in their school compared to 14.0% of students in states with generic laws and 14.3% of students in states with no laws.¹¹⁰

Figure 59. Biased Remarks by Type of State Anti-Bullying/Harassment Legislation



These findings from the 2009 survey on the type of state legislation are consistent with findings from 2007 — students from states with comprehensive laws report safer and more supportive school environments than students from states with generic legislation. Thus, the findings provide evidence that states with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment laws with specific, enumerated categories do indeed offer better and perhaps more concrete protection for students. Yet in recent years, more states have passed generic laws than comprehensive ones. In that so few states remain that have no

anti-bullying/harassment legislation, safe schools advocates and education leaders may need to turn their attention to how effectively state anti-bullying/harassment laws are implemented — for example, how successfully have states implemented programmatic components of their laws, and how has the implementation translated into improvements in the student experience and for which students. It will be increasingly important for safe school advocates to examine how local districts can provide protections regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Figure 60. Frequency of School Staff Intervention Re: Homophobic Remarks and Negative Remarks about Gender Expression by Type of State Anti-Bullying/Harassment Legislation

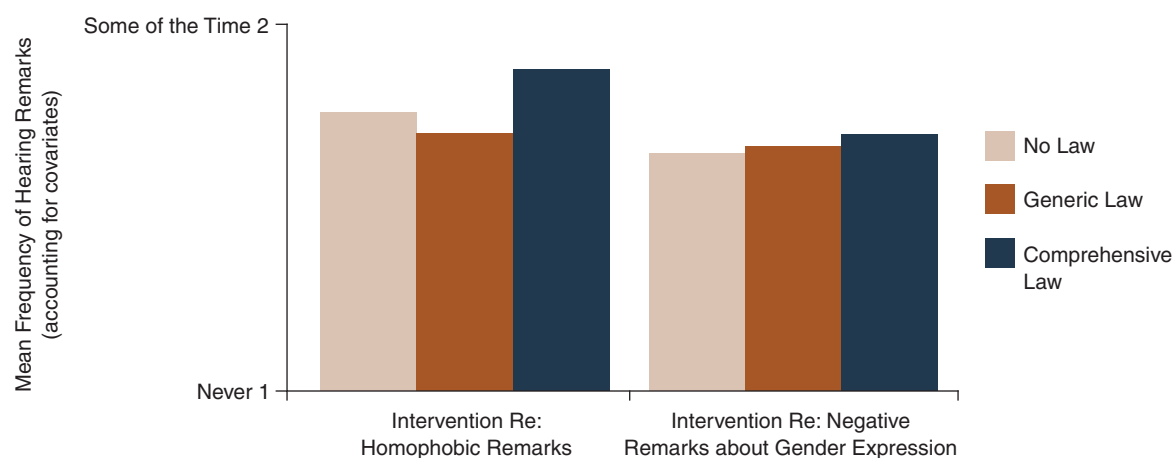


Figure 61. Experiences of Victimization by Type of State Anti-Bullying/Harassment Legislation

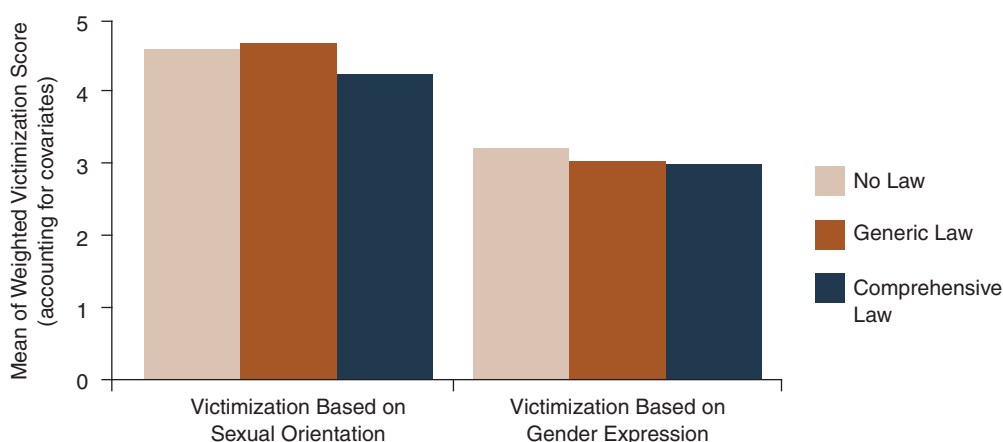
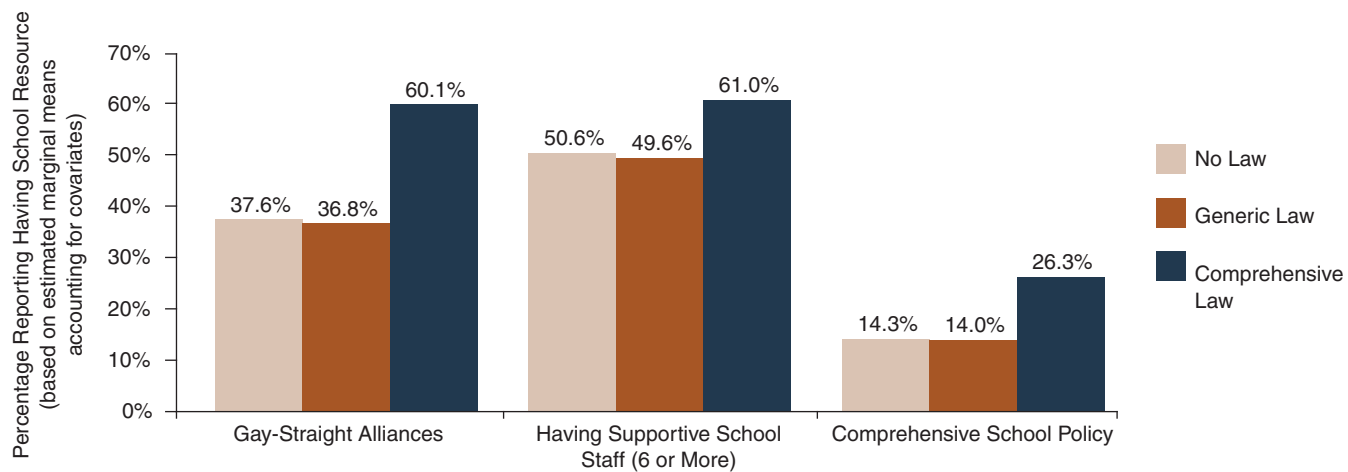
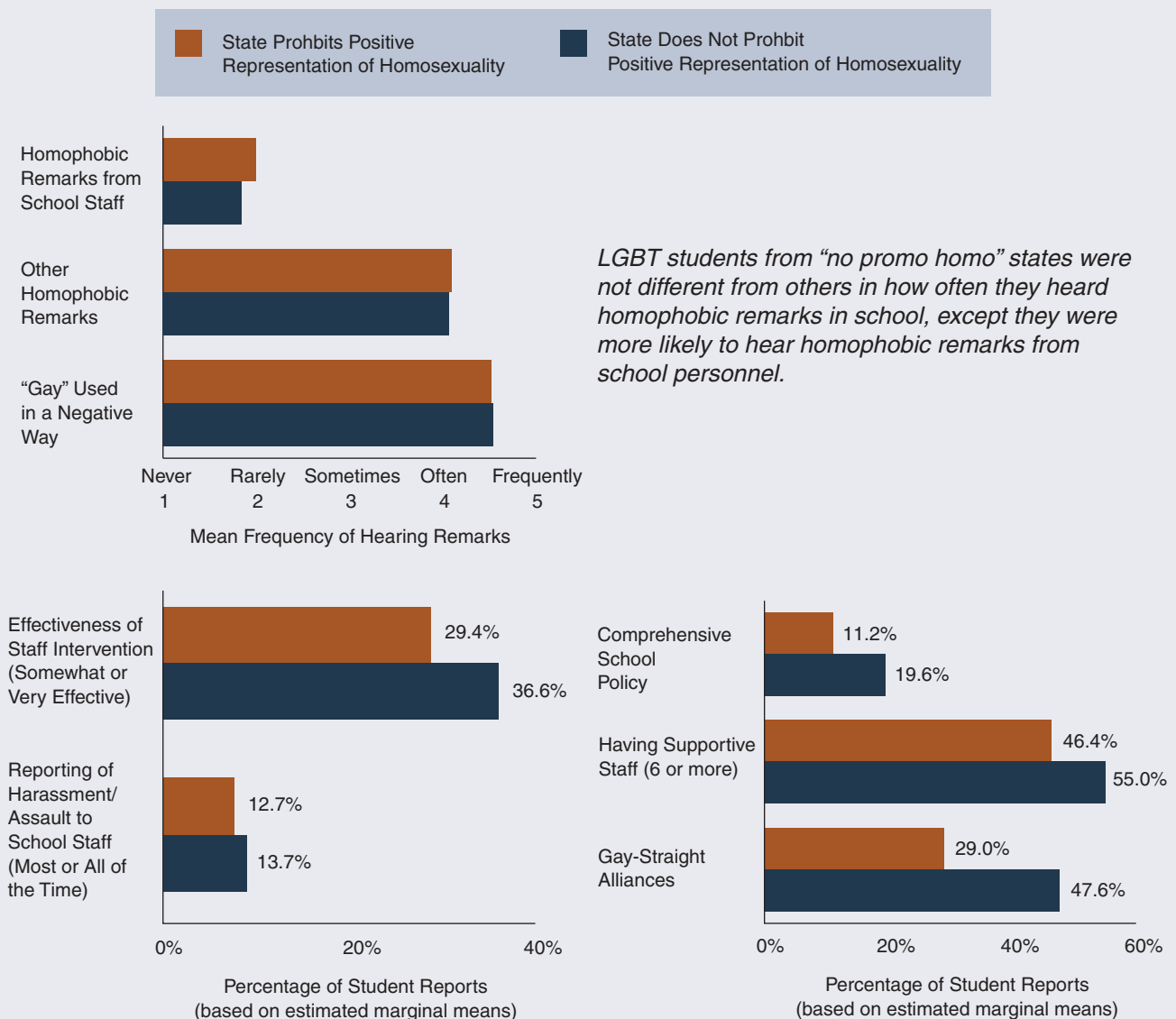


Figure 62. School Resources by Type of State Anti-Bullying/Harassment Legislation



Insight on “No Promo Homo” Laws

Certain state and local policies and laws may act to stigmatize LGBT people and, in turn, may negatively affect LGBT students and their education. Several states have prohibitions against the positive portrayal of homosexuality in schools (i.e., “no promo homo” laws). LGBT students in those states would be restricted from learning information about themselves and their communities in school.¹¹¹ In addition, other students would not have the opportunity to learn positive information about LGBT people, history, or events that could potentially decrease prejudices which may result in anti-LGBT bias in school. We examined whether students from states with these stigmatizing laws would, in fact, report more hostile school climates and fewer LGBT-related supports in their schools.¹¹² Results indicate that “no promo homo” laws can have a significant negative effect on the actions of teachers and other school staff toward LGBT students.¹¹³ Furthermore, students from “no promo homo” states report fewer school supports for LGBT students.¹¹⁴



Although students were no more or less likely to report incidents of harassment or assault to school staff, students from states with “no promo homo” laws found school staff to be far less effective in handling these matters when they were made aware of it.

Students from states with “no promo homo” laws were less likely to report having LGBT-related resources in school, such as comprehensive school harassment/assault policies, school personnel supportive of LGBT students, and Gay-Straight Alliances.

COMPARISONS BY DEMOGRAPHIC AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Workshop at GLSEN's 2008 Jump-Start National Student Leadership Summit in Boston, an event aimed at empowering student leaders to serve as safe schools advocates in their schools and communities.

Demographic Comparisons in Safety and Victimization



Key Findings

- African American/Black and Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT students were less likely than other groups to report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression.
- Transgender students were more likely than all other groups to report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and gender expression. They were also more likely than all other groups to avoid school bathrooms and locker rooms because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable in those spaces.
- Lesbian and gay students were more likely than bisexual students and students of "other" sexual orientations to feel unsafe and to report experiencing high levels of harassment because of their sexual orientation at school.

GLSEN's mission is to ensure that school communities provide safe and respectful environments for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. In order to achieve this mission, it is important to understand the multiplicity of experiences LGBT students have in school. LGBT students are a diverse population, and although they share some experiences related to school climate, such as safety concerns related to their sexual orientation and gender expression, these experiences may vary by students' personal characteristics. For this reason, we examined whether LGBT students' sense of safety and experiences of harassment and assault related to sexual orientation and gender expression differed by race or ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. While we would expect that students' own experiences of safety and harassment may vary by these demographic characteristics, we would not expect the availability of school-based LGBT-related resources (e.g., presence of GSAs or harassment/assault policies) to differ by students' personal characteristics, above and beyond of difference in the types of schools they attend. Thus, we did not examine relationships between student demographics and the availability of school-based resources.

Comparisons by Race and Ethnicity

We examined potential differences in LGBT students' experiences of safety and victimization in the past year at school based on sexual orientation or gender expression across racial/ethnic groups (White or European American, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, and multi-racial).¹¹⁵ Across groups, sizable percentages of students reported feeling unsafe and being harassed at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. For example, as shown in Figure 64, more than half of each group reported experiencing high frequencies (sometimes or greater) of verbal harassment based on sexual orientation in the past year at school. However, Black/African American and Asian/Pacific Islander were somewhat less likely than other groups to report having these experiences.^{116,117}

Specifically, Black/African American LGBT students in our survey were:

- Less likely to report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression than Hispanic/Latino, White/European American, and multi-racial students (see Figure 63); and
- Less likely to report being harassed or assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression than Hispanic/Latino, White/European American, and multi-racial students (see Figures 64 and 65).

Asian/Pacific Islander LGBT students were:

- Less likely to feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression than Hispanic/Latino, White/European American, or multi-racial students (see also Figure 63);
- Less likely to report experiencing harassment or assault based on sexual orientation than Hispanic/Latino, White/European American, or multi-racial students (see also Figure 64); and
- Less likely than multi-racial students to be harassed or assaulted based on gender expression (see also Figure 65).

It is important to note that despite these differences by racial/ethnic identity, significant numbers of LGBT students had hostile school experiences related to their sexual orientation and gender expression. These findings are consistent with results from prior National School Climate Surveys, where we have found that Black/African American LGBT students reported experiencing lower levels of anti-LGBT victimization in school. Yet, we cannot know from our data what factors underlie the differences found here. It may be that racial/ethnic differences are partly a function of the varying characteristics of schools that youth attend or other factors, such as relationships with peer networks in school, or other aspects of students' identities, such as gender. Further research is needed that examines why there are these racial/ethnic differences in LGBT youth's experiences.

Figure 63. Sense of Safety at School by Race or Ethnicity

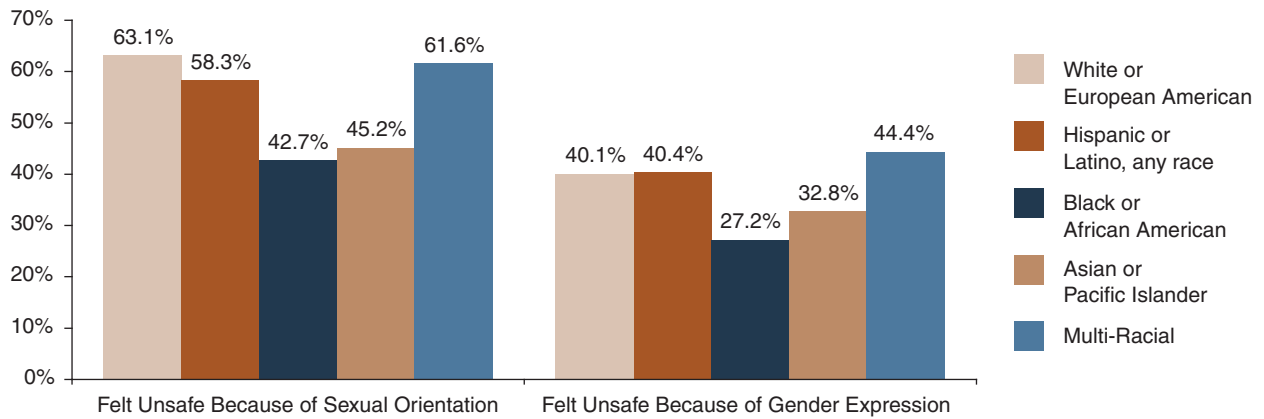


Figure 64. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by Race or Ethnicity
(percentage of students who experienced event "sometimes," "often," or "frequently")

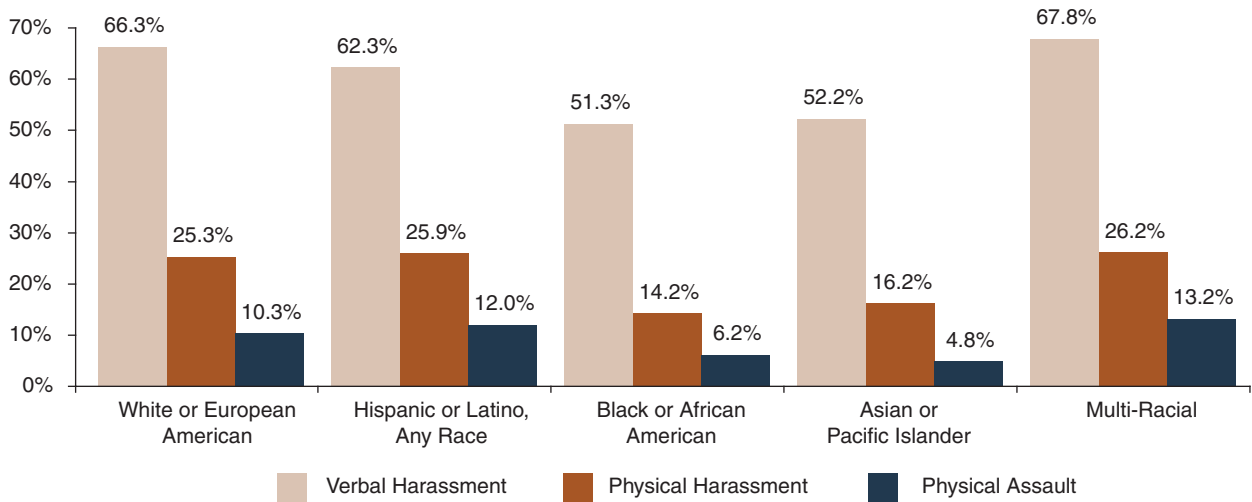
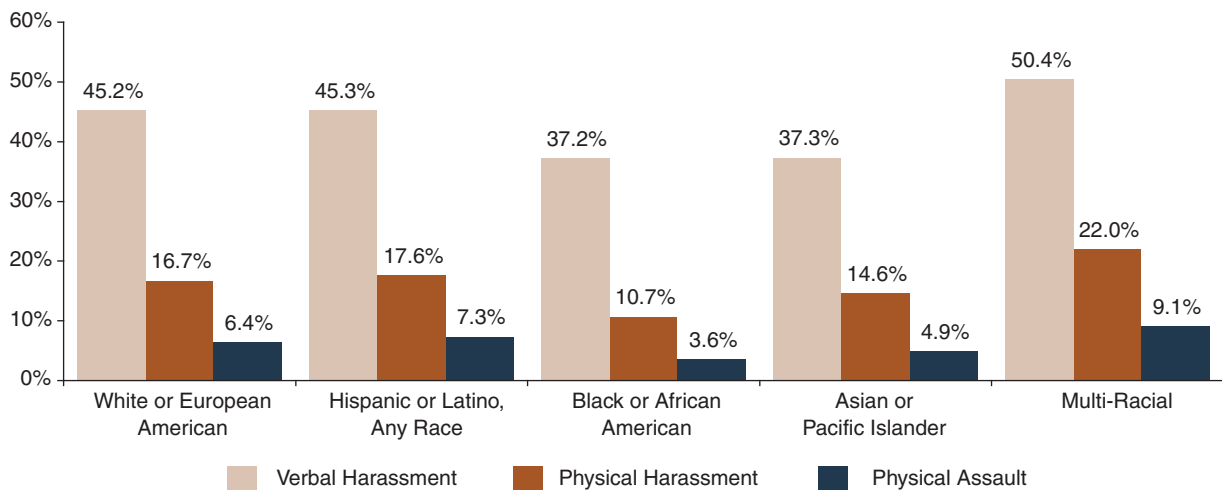


Figure 65. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Race or Ethnicity
(percentage of students who experienced event "sometimes," "often," or "frequently")



Comparisons by Gender Identity

Across all gender groups, many students reported feeling unsafe and experiencing high frequencies (sometimes or greater) of harassment or assault at school related to their sexual orientation or gender expression. For example, more than half of students across groups felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation (see Figure 66). However, there were some significant differences between groups.

Overall, female students in our survey were less likely to report negative safety-related experiences at school. Specifically, female students were:

- Least likely to report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression (see Figure 66);¹¹⁸
- Least likely to experience verbal harassment based on sexual orientation (see Figure 67);¹¹⁹
- Less likely than transgender students and students with other gender identities to have been physically assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation (see also Figure 67); and
- Least likely to report experiencing harassment or assault at school related to their gender expression (see Figure 68).

Transgender students, however, were generally more likely than all other students to have negative experiences at school. More specifically, transgender students were more likely to:

- Feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation and gender expression than students who identified as female, male, or other genders (see Figure 66);
- Be physically harassed or assaulted at school based on their sexual orientation than male and female students (see Figure 67); and
- Be harassed or assaulted at school because of their gender expression (see Figure 68) than all other students.

Students with other gender identities (e.g., genderqueer) were more likely to feel unsafe and to report being harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression than male or female students (see also Figures 66 and 68).

Figure 66. Sense of Safety at School by Gender Identity

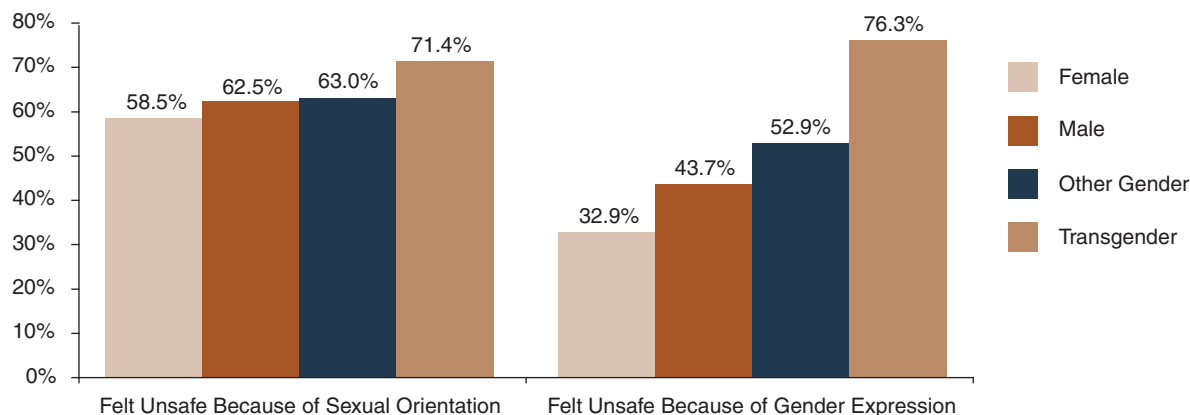


Figure 67. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by Gender Identity
(percentage of students who experienced event “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)

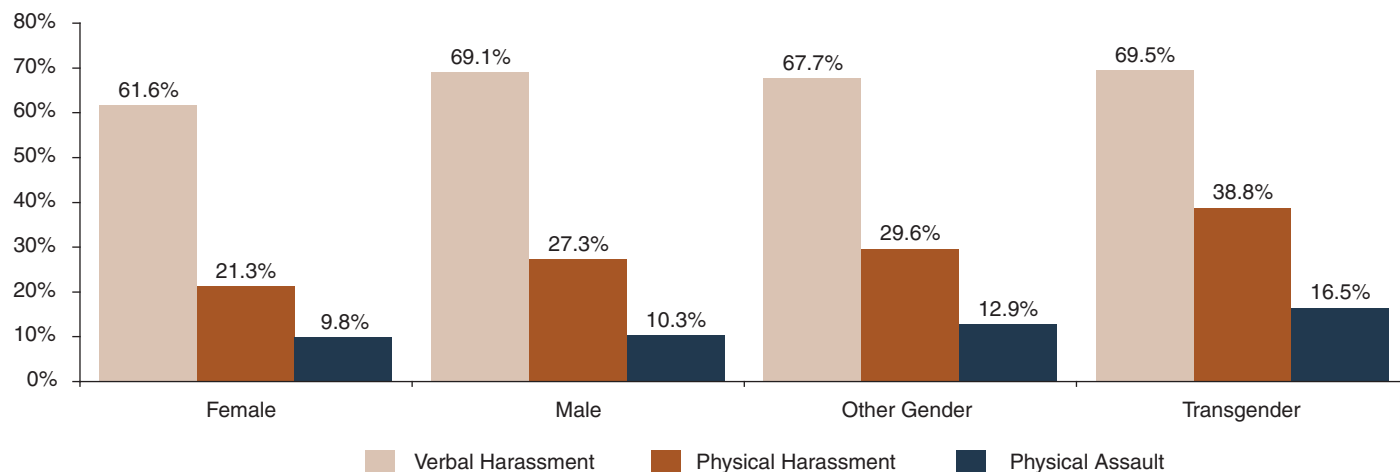
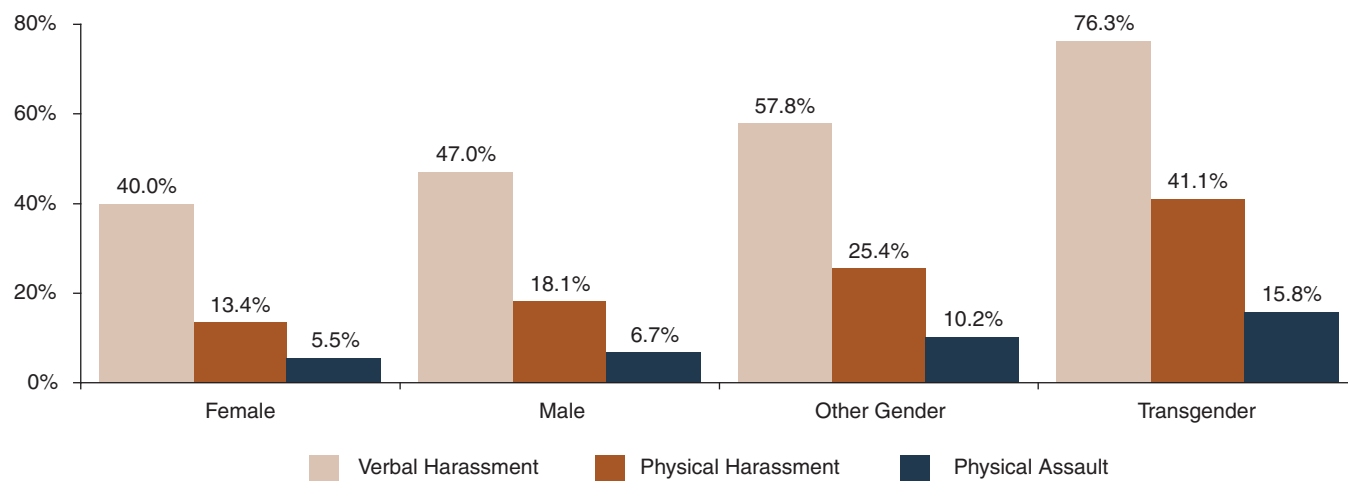


Figure 68. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Gender Identity
(percentage of students who experienced event “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)



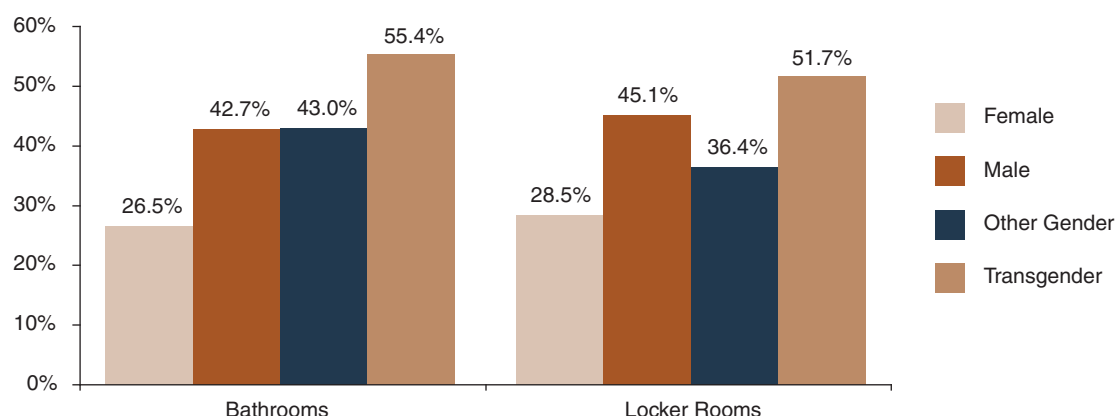
As shown in the *School Safety* section, sizable percentages of LGBT students avoided places at school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, most notably spaces that are traditionally segregated by sex such as bathrooms and locker rooms. For transgender students, accessing sex-segregated spaces at school may be particularly challenging.¹²⁰ We examined whether there were gender differences in the percentages of students who reported avoiding school bathrooms and locker rooms and found that transgender students were, indeed, most likely to avoid these spaces.¹²¹ As shown in Figure 69, a majority of transgender students avoided school bathrooms (55.4%) and locker rooms (51.7%), compared to less than half of all other groups. In addition, male students were more likely to report avoiding locker rooms than students with other gender identities, and female students were least likely to report avoiding either of these types of spaces (see also Figure 69).

Our analysis took into account experiences of victimization, and these differences were not explained by the different levels of victimization by gender. Thus, feeling unsafe or uncomfortable in school bathrooms and locker rooms was related to other factors, above and beyond actual victimization. Nevertheless, there could be a greater perceived threat of victimization in these spaces. Furthermore, for youth who identify or express their gender in ways that do not conform to their community's expectations or "norms," sex-segregated spaces may be particularly difficult for them to navigate. Even in the absence of overt victimization while in

a school bathroom or locker room, a student may experience other hostile reactions and behaviors from classmates. Unfortunately, most schools fail to accommodate the needs of students who feel unsafe or uncomfortable in sex-segregated spaces. School staff need to be aware of the various ways that gender non-conforming youth may be made to feel unsafe or uncomfortable in sex-segregated spaces, and work with those youth to identify short- and long-term strategies for addressing these situations.

The differences between female students and all other groups were more pronounced with regard to safety and victimization based on gender expression than victimization based on sexual orientation. It is possible that female-identified students in our survey expressed their gender at school in ways that conformed more to societal expectations, and as a result, they were less likely to experience negative events related to gender expression. It could also be that there is something about being female in our society that may allow for more fluidity of gender expression, particularly when compared to males — it is often considered more acceptable for a girl to dress or behave in ways deemed "masculine" than for a boy to dress or behave in a "feminine" manner. Our findings also highlight that while safety is a concern for many LGBT students regardless of their gender identity, transgender youth may face additional challenges at school. These current findings of gender differences in students' school experiences are consistent with findings from prior National School Climate Surveys.

**Figure 69. Comparison by Gender Identity:
Percentage of Students Who Avoided Spaces at School
Because They Felt Unsafe or Uncomfortable**
(accounting for severity of victimization)



Comparisons by Sexual Orientation

We also examined differences in students' experiences of safety and victimization in the past year at school across sexual orientation groups — lesbian and gay, bisexual, students with other sexual orientations (e.g., queer or pansexual), and students questioning their orientation. The majority of lesbian/gay, bisexual, and students with other orientations reported feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation and experiencing high frequencies of verbal harassment for this reason (see Figures 70 and 71). Students who were questioning or unsure of their sexual orientation were much less likely to have these experiences at school. There were some other significant differences between groups as well.

Lesbian and gay students were:

- More likely than all other students to feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation (see Figure 70);¹²²
- More likely to experience verbal or physical harassment based on their sexual orientation than all other students (see Figures 71);¹²³
- More likely than bisexual and questioning students to report being physically assaulted at school based on their sexual orientation (see also Figure 71); and
- More likely than bisexual or questioning students to report being harassed or assaulted at school because of their gender expression (see Figure 72).

In addition, students who identified as other sexual orientations were more likely than lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning students to have experienced verbal harassment at school related to their gender expression (see also Figure 72).

Although sizeable percentages of questioning students reported feeling unsafe and experiencing harassment related to their sexual orientation and gender expression, they tended to report the lowest levels of victimization. We cannot determine from our data why questioning students reported less hostile school experiences, and future research should further examine this finding. Bisexual students were not different from lesbian and gay students regarding school safety related to sexual orientation; however, they were less likely to feel unsafe and experience victimization based on gender expression. In our survey, we did not include questions asking students to indicate or describe how they expressed their gender or whether they were perceived as gender non-conforming in their schools. It is possible that bisexual students in our survey were less likely to have negative experiences related to gender expression because they were less likely to express themselves in ways considered to be non-conforming. Future research should examine how students express their gender in order to understand this finding further.

Figure 70. Sense of Safety at School by Sexual Orientation

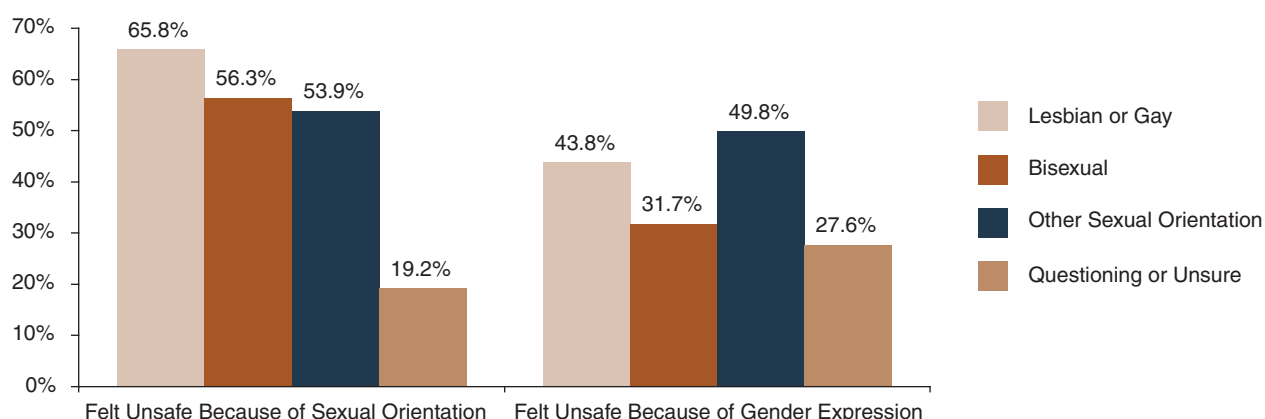


Figure 71. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by Sexual Orientation
(percentage of students who experienced event "sometimes," "often," or "frequently")

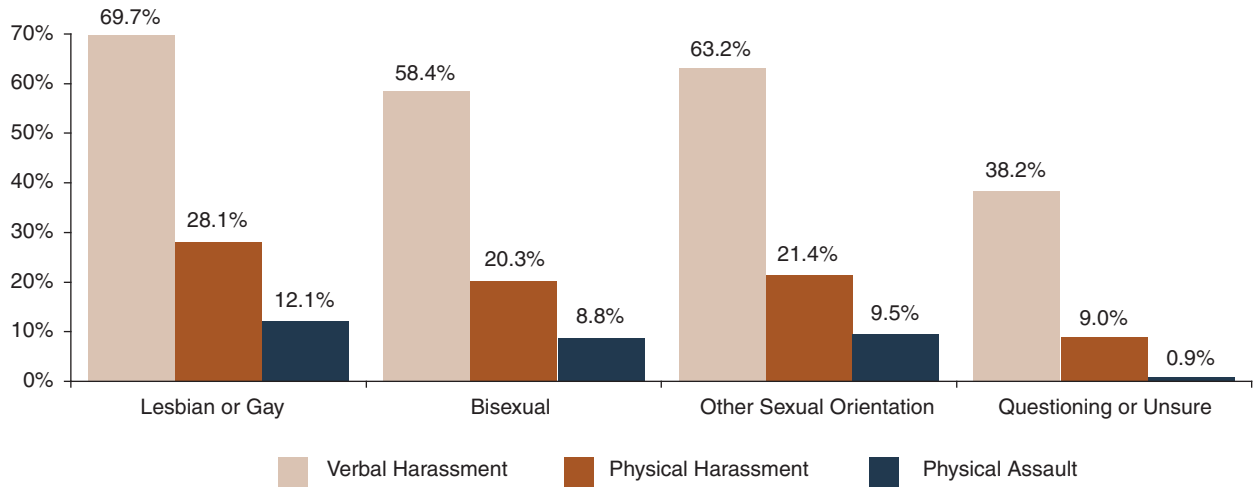
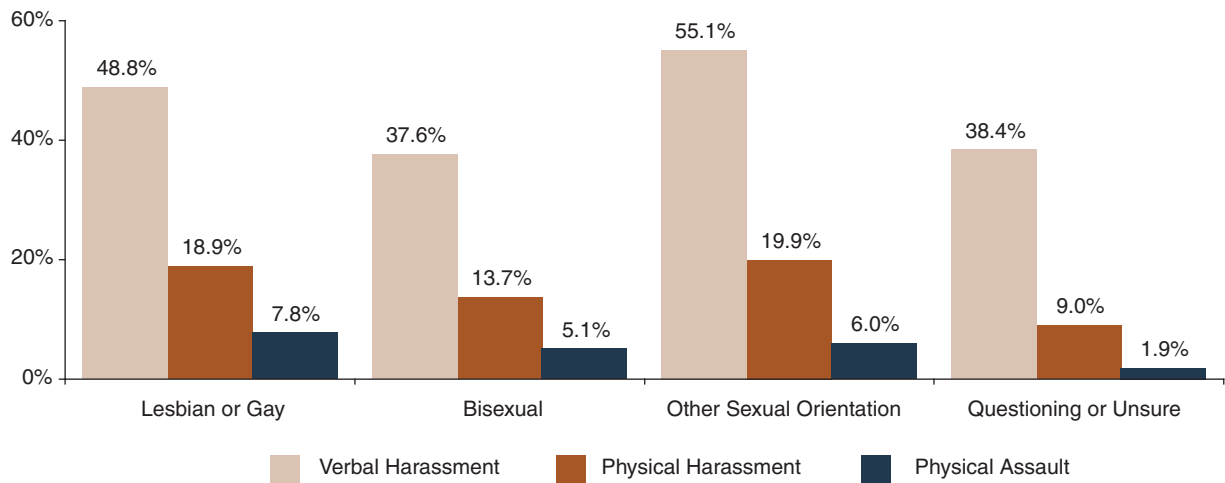


Figure 72. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Sexual Orientation
(percentage of students who experienced event "sometimes," "often," or "frequently")



Comparisons of Biased Language, Victimization, and School Resources and Supports by School Characteristics

Key Findings

- Compared to high school students, LGBT students in middle school were more likely to experience harassment and assault based on sexual orientation or gender expression, and less likely to have access to LGBT-related resources and supports.
- Students in non-religious private schools were less likely to hear homophobic remarks and negative remarks about someone's gender expression than students in public or religious schools. Private school students were also less likely to be harassed or assaulted based on sexual orientation or gender expression, and more likely to have access LGBT-related resources and supports.
- Charter school students did not differ from other public school students on indicators of school safety or in their access to LGBT-related resources and supports.
- Students from schools in the South and Midwest and from schools in small towns or rural areas were most likely to hear homophobic remarks and negative remarks about someone's gender expression. They were also more likely to be harassed or assaulted based on sexual orientation or gender expression.
- Students from schools in the South, the Midwest, and small towns or rural areas were least likely to have access to LGBT-related resources and supports.

LGBT youth as a group share some similar experiences in school, but they are not a homogenous group and they have diverse experiences. Just as LGBT students' school experiences may vary based upon their demographic characteristics, their experiences may also vary based on the characteristics of their schools. Therefore, we examined students' reports of hearing biased language, experiences of victimization, and the availability of LGBT-related resources and supports by grade level, school type, geographic region, and locale.

Comparisons by Grade Level

We examined differences in biased language and experiences of victimization based on grade level — whether a student was in middle school grades (grades 6–8) or high school grades (grades 9–12).

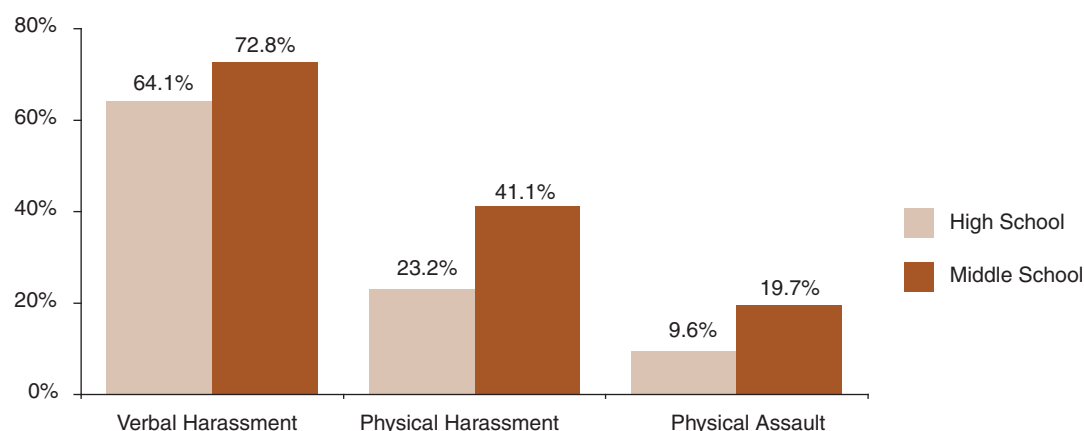
Biased Language in School. Overall, middle and high school students did not differ in the frequency with which they heard homophobic remarks or negative remarks about gender expression.¹²⁴ However, there was a small difference with homophobic epithets (e.g., “faggot” or “dyke”) — middle school students heard these types of epithets slightly more often than high school students.

Experiences of Victimization. There were significant differences in experiences of victimization by grade level.¹²⁵ Compared to high school students, middle school students experienced higher levels of all types of victimization (verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault) based on sexual orientation and gender expression (see Figures 73 and 74). For example, 41.1% of middle school students experienced physical harassment based on their sexual orientation sometimes, often, or frequently, compared to less than a quarter (23.2%) of high school students (see Figure 73).

School Resources and Supports. We examined differences in access to LGBT-related resources and supports and found significant differences by grade level (see Figure 75).¹²⁶ Students in middle schools were less likely than students in high schools to have access to resources and supports. As shown in Figure 75, middle school students:

- Were less likely have a GSA or other similar student club that addresses LGBT students' issues at their school;
- Were less likely to have curriculum, textbooks, or assigned readings that includes LGBT people, history, or events;
- Were less likely to have access to LGBT-related information in their school library or through the Internet using school computers;

Figure 73. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by Grade Level
(percentage of students who experienced event “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)



- Were slightly less likely to have a comprehensive harassment/assault policy at their school; and
- Were less likely to have supportive school administrations and had fewer staff supportive of LGBT students.

Overall, our findings suggest that LGBT students in middle schools face more hostile school climates than LGBT high school students, which is similar to research on bullying and harassment in the general population of students.¹²⁷ The findings are also consistent with research on adolescents' attitudes toward gay and lesbian people and harassment — older adolescents are more accepting of LG people and less tolerant of harassment based on sexual orientation and gender expression than younger adolescents.¹²⁸

Not only did middle school students experience more victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression than those in high school, they also had much less access to school-based resources and supports that can help to create safer and more affirming schools, such as Gay-Straight Alliances, supportive school personnel, a comprehensive harassment/assault policy, and inclusive curricular resources. Given the higher incidence of victimization of LGBT students in middle schools, it is even more crucial that education leaders and safe school advocates increase efforts to ensure that these schools provide effective resources and supports for LGBT students.

Figure 74. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Grade Level
(percentage of students who experienced event “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)

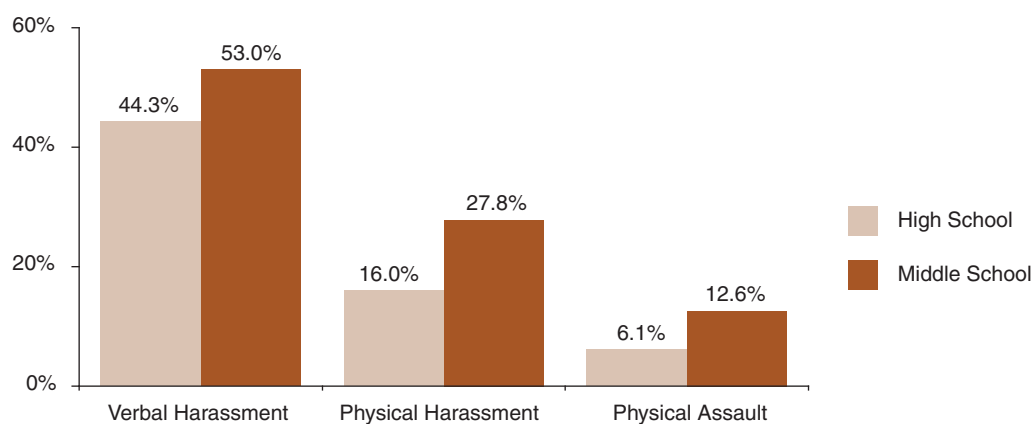
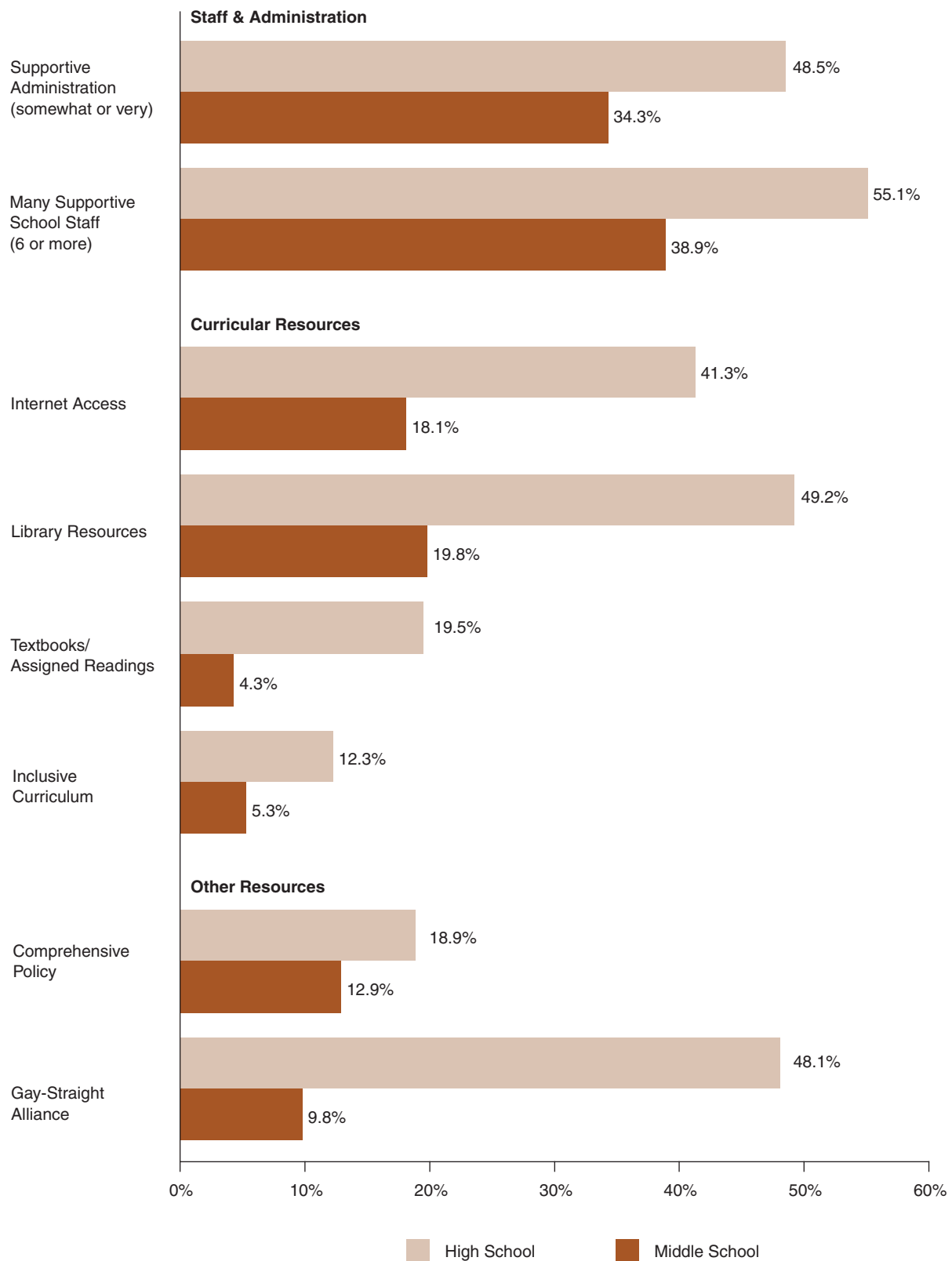


Figure 75. LGBT-Related Resources and Supports by Grade Level



Comparisons by School Type

We also compared students' experiences with biased language and victimization based on the type of school they attended — public, religious, or private non-religious schools. In general, we found that students in private non-religious schools experienced less hostile climates than other students.

Biased Language in School. Students in private non-religious schools reported hearing biased language less frequently than students in other schools. Specifically, these students:¹²⁹

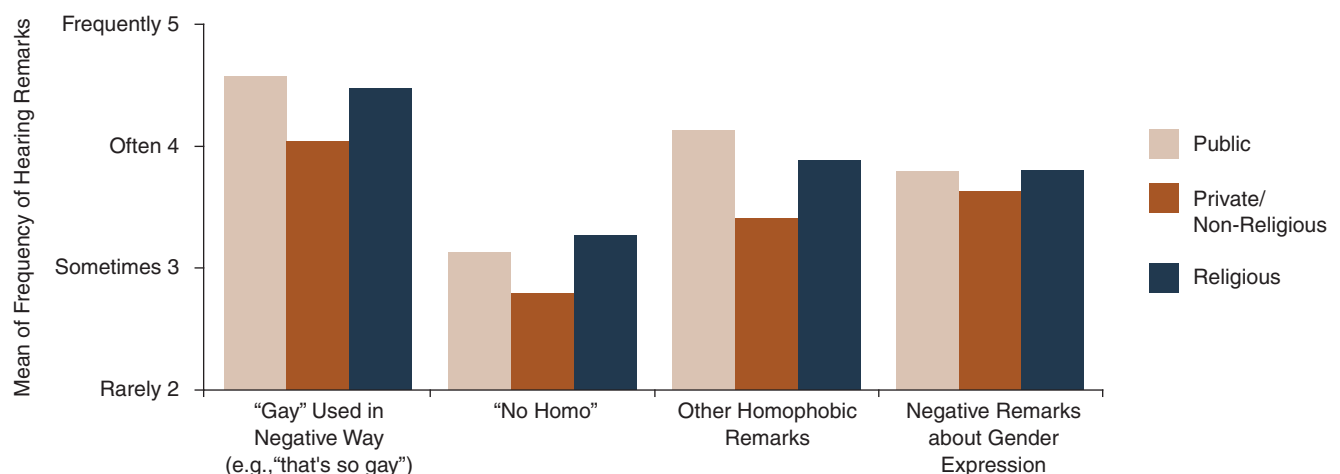
- Heard all types of anti-LGBT language less often than students in public schools — the word “gay” used in a negative way, the expression “no homo,” other types of homophobic remarks (i.e., “faggot” or “dyke”), and negative remarks about gender expression (see Figure 76).
- Heard homophobic language less often than students in religious schools — including the word “gay” used in a negative way, the expression “no homo,” and other homophobic remarks (see also Figure 76). However, they did not significantly differ regarding remarks about gender expression.

There was only one significant difference between students in religious schools and students in public schools — religious school students reported hearing other types of homophobic remarks less often than public school students (see also Figure 76).

Experiences of Victimization. There were also significant differences in victimization by school type.¹³⁰ Similar to reports of biased language, students in private non-religious schools reported lower levels of victimization than students in public schools and religious schools (see Figures 77 and 78). Specifically, students in private non-religious schools experienced:

- Less verbal harassment based on sexual orientation than students in both religious schools and public schools (see Figure 77);
- Less physical victimization (both harassment and assault) based on sexual orientation than public school students, but were not different from religious school students (see also Figure 77); and
- Slightly less of all types of victimization (verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault) based on gender expression than public school students (see Figure 78). There were no differences between private non-religious schools and religious schools regarding frequency of victimization based on gender expression.

Figure 76. Frequency of Biased Remarks by School Type



Religious school students differed from public school students only in the frequency of verbal harassment based on sexual orientation — religious school students reported lower levels of this harassment than public school students.

School Resources and Supports. There were significant differences in availability of LGBT-related resources and supports by school type (see Figure 79).¹³¹ In general, students in non-private non-religious schools were most likely to have access to resources and supports. As shown in Figure 79, students in private non-religious schools were more likely than students in other types of schools to report having:

- A GSA or similar club in their school;
- Curriculum that included positive information about LGBT people, history, or events and to have access to LGBT-related information through the Internet using their school computers;
- A school with a comprehensive harassment/assault policy;
- Staff who were supportive of LGBT students; and
- School administrations that were more supportive of LGBT students.

Figure 77. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by School Type

(percentage of students who experienced event “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)

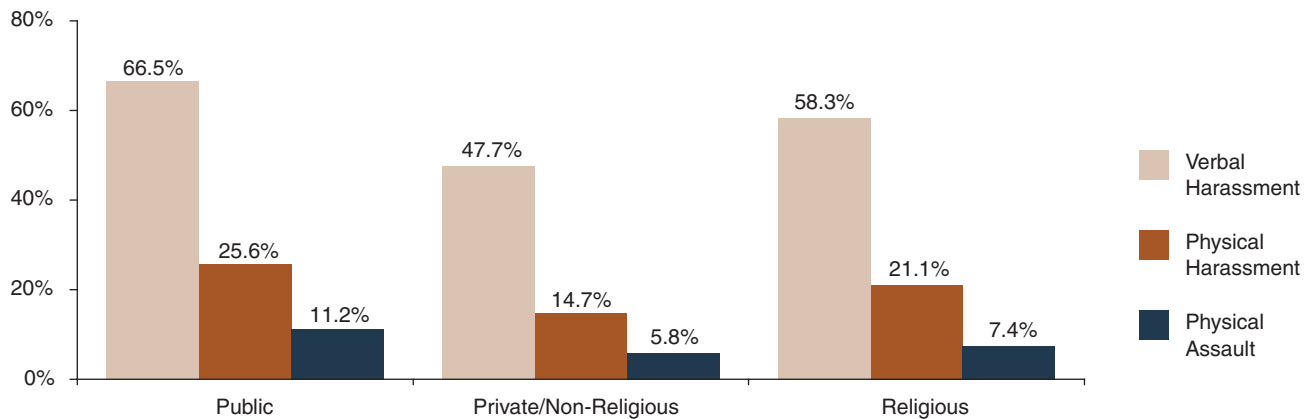


Figure 78. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by School Type

(percentage of students who experienced event “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)

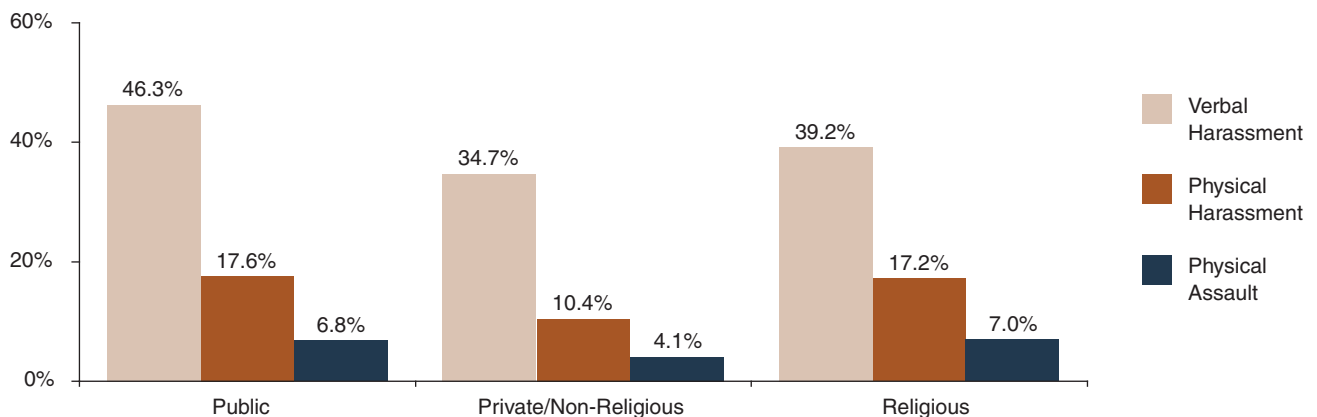
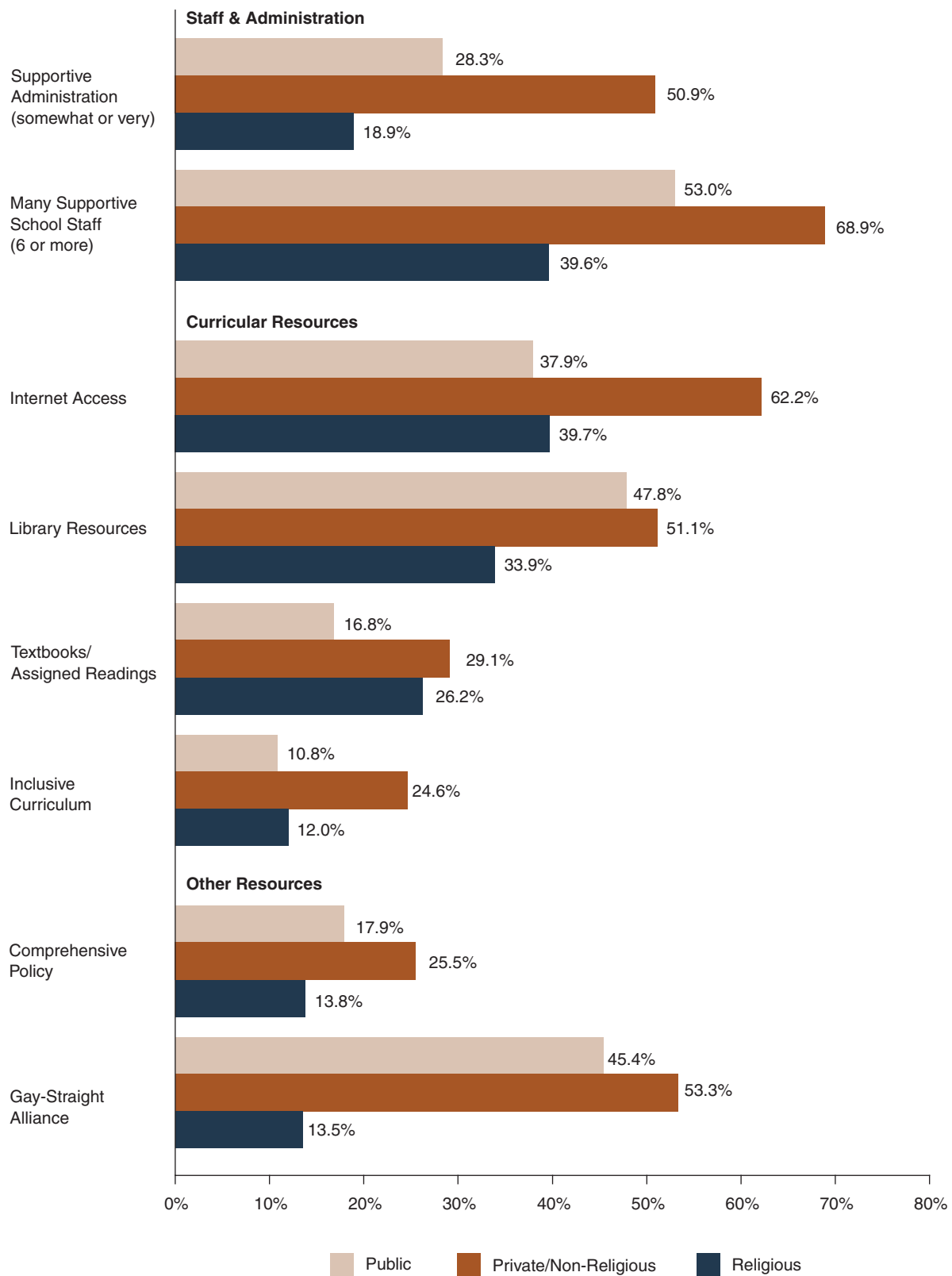


Figure 79. LGBT-Related Resources and Supports by School Type



In contrast, as also shown in Figure 79, students in religious-affiliated schools were less likely to have:

- A GSA or similar club in their school;
- Access to LGBT-related information in their school library;
- Staff who were supportive of LGBT students; and
- School administrations that were supportive of LGBT students.

Furthermore, LGBT students in public schools were less likely than students in other schools to have textbooks or assigned readings that contained LGBT-related information (see also Figure 79).

Overall, we found that private non-religious schools were more positive environments for LGBT youth than public schools or religious schools, and these findings are consistent with other research about school-type differences in bullying and school climate for the general student population.¹³² Not only were private school students less likely to hear anti-LGBT language and less likely to be victimized, but they also had greater access to LGBT-related resources and supports, such as a GSA, curricular resources, supportive school staff, and comprehensive harassment/assault policy. In contrast, LGBT students in religious schools were least likely to have these supports, and thus, may be particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of a hostile school climate.

Insight on Charter Schools

Charter schools are schools that receive public funds but are not subject to all the policies and regulations that apply to other public schools. In exchange, these charter schools agree to produce certain academic results, which are established in each school's charter.¹³³ In 2009, 3.1% of the nation's public school students were enrolled in charter schools,¹³⁴ and 3.1% is the same percentage of LGBT students in our 2009 survey who were in charter schools. Charter schools have become a key component of many school reform efforts. Recently, federal education policy has placed a strong emphasis on charter schools as a means of increasing educational quality. Thus, it is important to examine LGBT students' experiences in charter schools. To that end, we compared differences between students attending charter schools and non-charter public schools.

School Safety. Charter school students did not differ from other public school students on indicators of school safety: hearing anti-LGBT language, feeling unsafe because of sexual orientation or gender expression, experiencing harassment and assault based on sexual orientation or gender expression.¹³⁵

School Resources. Charter and non-charter school students did not differ on access to LGBT-related school resources and supports, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), supportive staff, or comprehensive school harassment/assault policies.¹³⁶

School Belonging. In our 2009 survey, students in charter schools were more likely to feel connected to their school communities and were more likely to believe that other students at their school were accepting of LGBT people than students in non-charter public schools.¹³⁷

Overall, charter schools did not appear to be any more or less safe for LGBT students or any more or less likely to provide supports to LGBT students. However, LGBT students in charter schools still felt more a part of their school community than LGBT student in other public schools. This finding may be related to the fact that students or their parents choose the school, the student-teacher ratio may be smaller, or the school's educational practices may instill a more collaborative or collegial environment. With increased attention being paid to charter schools, it is important that future research further examine the experiences of LGBT students in these schools.

Comparisons by Region

We also examined whether there were differences in students' experiences with biased language and victimization based on region of the country — Northeast, South, Midwest, or West.¹³⁸ In general, we found that students attending schools in the South experienced the most hostile school climates, whereas students attending schools in the Northeast and the West experienced the least hostile school climate.

Biased Language in School. In general, LGBT students attending schools in the Northeast and the West reported lower frequencies of hearing homophobic and negative remarks about gender expression than students attending schools in the South and Midwest (see Figure 80).¹³⁹ However, students in the Northeast were more likely to report hearing the phrase “no homo” than were students in other regions of the country (see also Figure 80).

Experiences of Victimization. Overall, LGBT students from schools in the Northeast and the West reported significantly lower levels of victimization than students from schools in the South and the Midwest (see Figures 81 and 82).¹⁴⁰

- Students in the Northeast and West experienced less verbal and physical harassment based on sexual orientation than students in the South and Midwest (see Figure 81).
- Students in the Northeast also experienced less physical assault based on sexual orientation

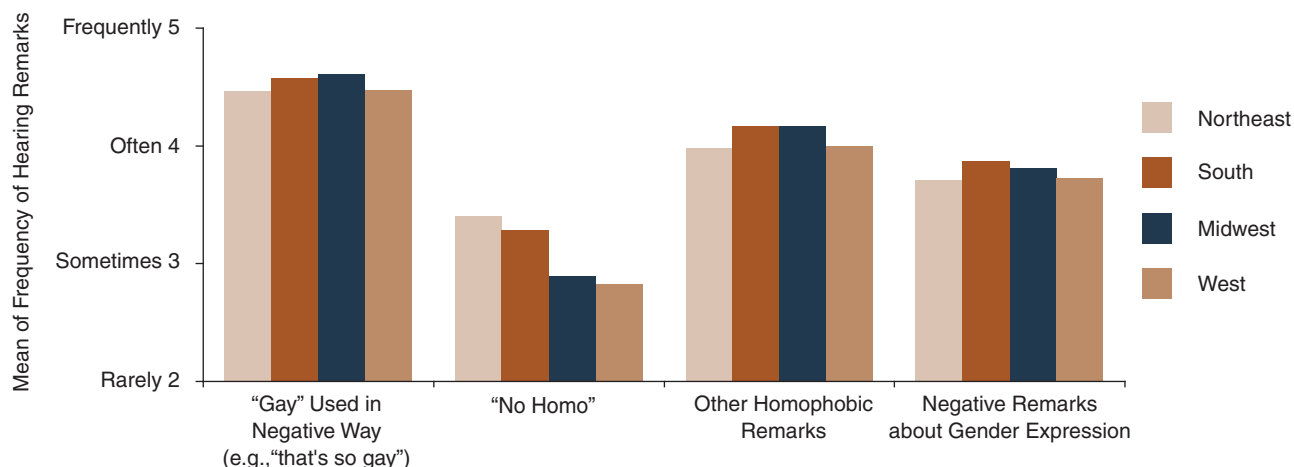
Compared to students in the Northeast and the West, students in the South and Midwest had more negative school climates.

than students in the South and Midwest (see also Figure 81). There were no differences between students in the West and students from other regions.

- Students in the Northeast experienced slightly less verbal and physical harassment based on gender expression than students in the South and Midwest (see Figure 82). There were no differences between students in the West and students from other regions.
- There were no regional differences in frequency of physical assault based on gender expression.

School Resources and Supports. Some significant differences were found across geographic regions in the availability of LGBT-related resources and supports.¹⁴¹ Overall, students in the Northeast and West were most likely to have access to LGBT-related resources or supports, whereas students attending schools in the South and Midwest were

Figure 80. Frequency of Biased Remarks by Region



least likely to have access (see Figure 83).¹⁴² Specifically, compared to other students, students in the South were less likely to have:

- A GSA or other student club that addressed LGBT issues;
- Curriculum that included positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events;
- Access to LGBT-related information in their school library or through the Internet using school computers;

- Comprehensive harassment/assault policy at their school; and
- School staff supportive of LGBT students and a supportive school administration.

Students in the Midwest were also less likely to have certain LGBT-related supports in their schools compared to students in the Northeast and the West:¹⁴³

- A GSA or other student club that addressed LGBT issues;

Figure 81. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by Region
(percentage of students experiencing event “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)

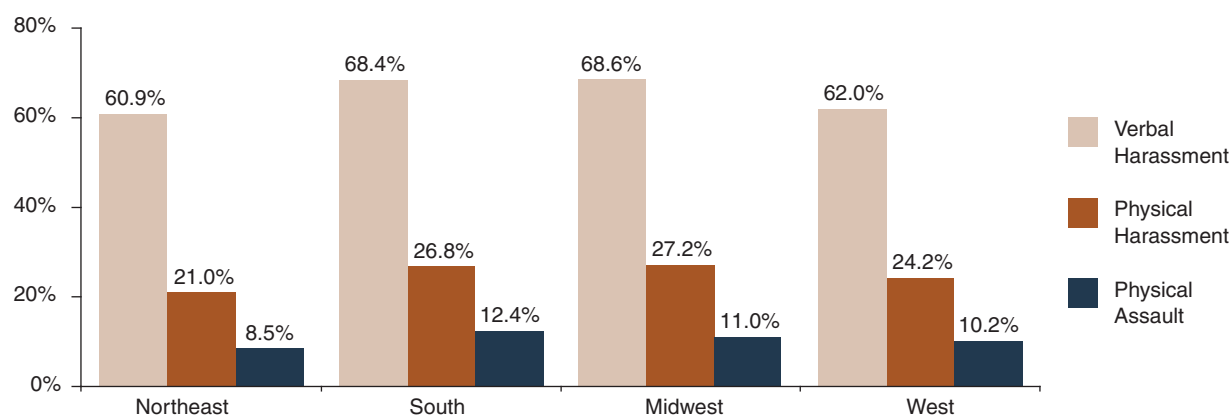


Figure 82. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Region
(percentage of students experiencing event “sometimes,” “often,” or “frequently”)

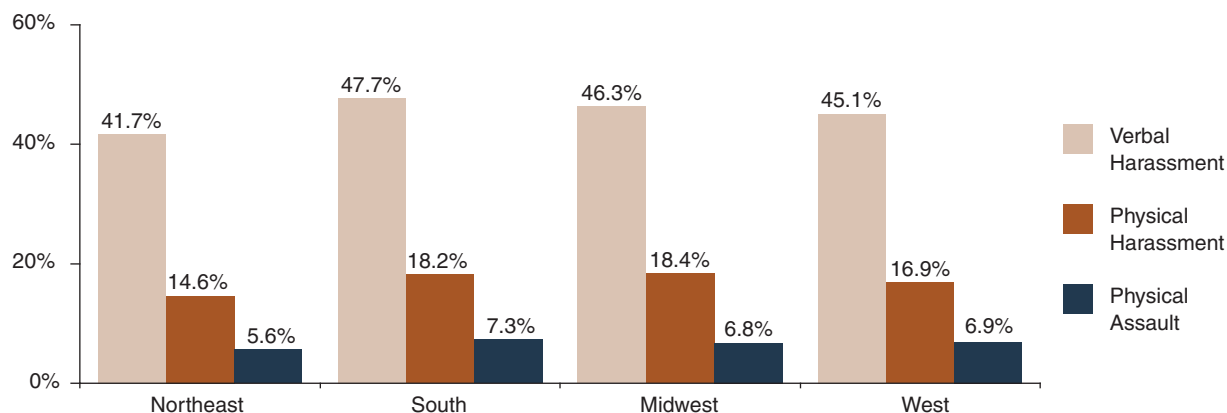
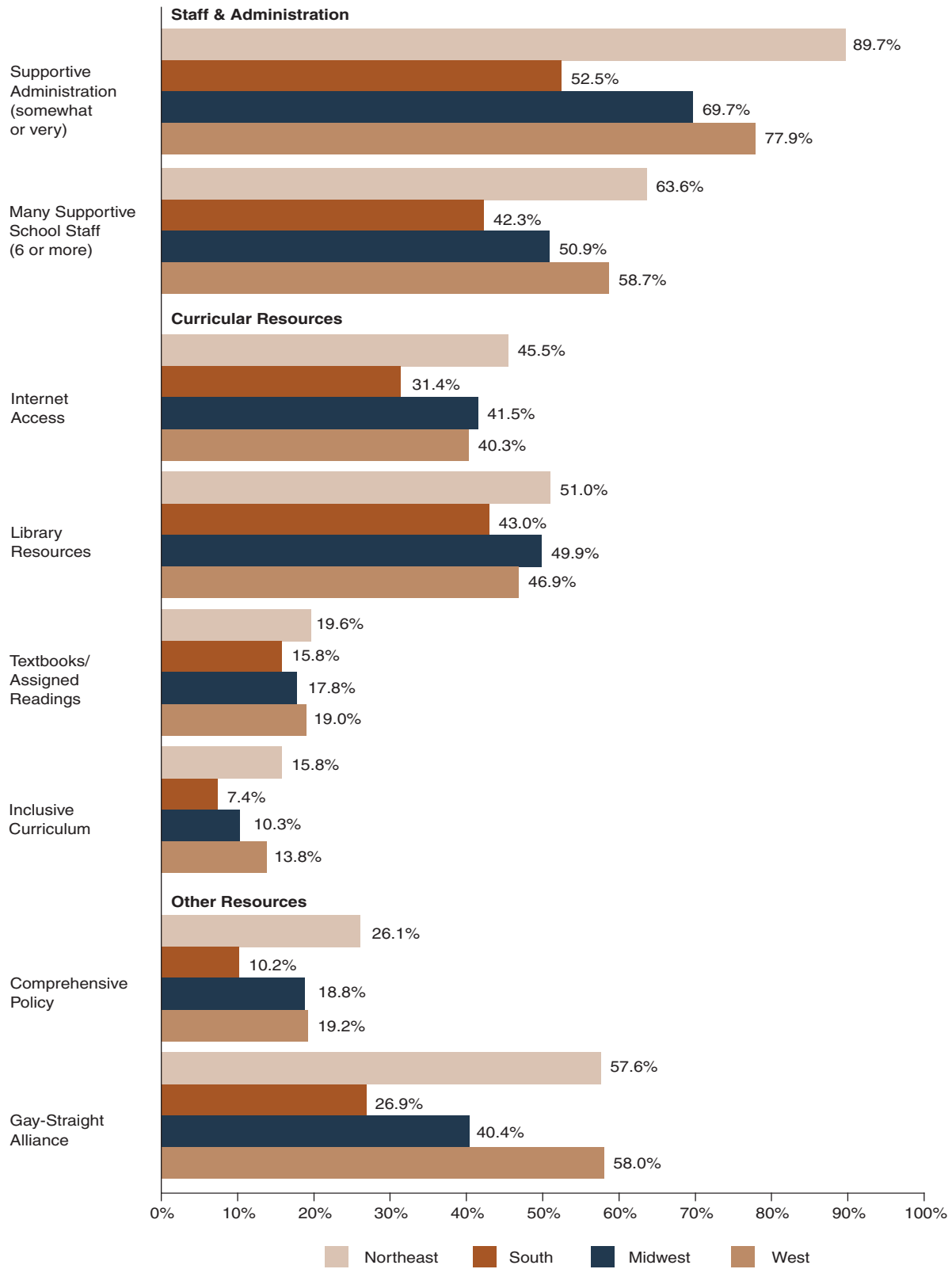


Figure 83. LGBT-Related Resources and Supports by Region



- Access to LGBT-related information in their school library or through the Internet using school computers;
- Comprehensive harassment/assault policy at their school; and
- School staff supportive of LGBT students and a supportive school administration.

There were clear regional differences in LGBT students' school experiences. Compared to students in the Northeast and the West, students in the South and Midwest had more negative school climates, including more frequent anti-LGBT language and higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression. Southern and Midwestern students also had less access to LGBT-related resources and supports, such as GSAs and supportive school staff. One exception to the pattern of regional differences regarding biased language concerned hearing the phrase “no homo” — students in the Northeast were more likely to hear this phrase than students in any other region. Thus, the findings regarding regional differences in hearing the phrase “no homo” may not necessarily indicate regional differences in levels of homophobia, but instead suggest that this phrase may not be common vernacular in other regions of the country other than the Northeast.

These regional findings highlight that much needs to be done in the South and Midwest specifically to ensure that LGBT students are safe at school. Education leaders and safe school advocates must focus specific efforts on schools in these regions. Further, it is also important to consider how to establish these critical LGBT-related resources and supports in these schools where LGBT students may be most at-risk for harassment and assault.

Comparisons by Locale

We examined whether there were differences among the students in our study based on the type of community in which their schools were located — urban areas, suburban areas, or small towns/rural areas. In general, we found that students attending schools in small towns or rural areas experienced a more hostile school climate than students in other areas.

Biased Language in School. With regard to biased language in school, there were significant differences across locales in students' reports of hearing homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression.¹⁴⁴ As shown in Figure 84, compared to students in urban and suburban schools, students in small town/rural schools reported:

- The highest frequency of hearing the word “gay” used in a negative way and of hearing other homophobic remarks (e.g., “fag” or “dyke”);
- The highest frequency of hearing negative remarks about gender expression; and
- The lowest frequency of hearing the phrase “no homo.”

Students attending schools in urban areas were also less likely to hear the word “gay” used in a negative way as well as other homophobic remarks than students in suburban schools (see Figure 84). There were, however, no significant differences between LGBT students in urban and suburban schools in frequency of hearing the phrase “no homo” or negative remarks about gender expression.

Figure 84. Frequency of Biased Remarks by Locale

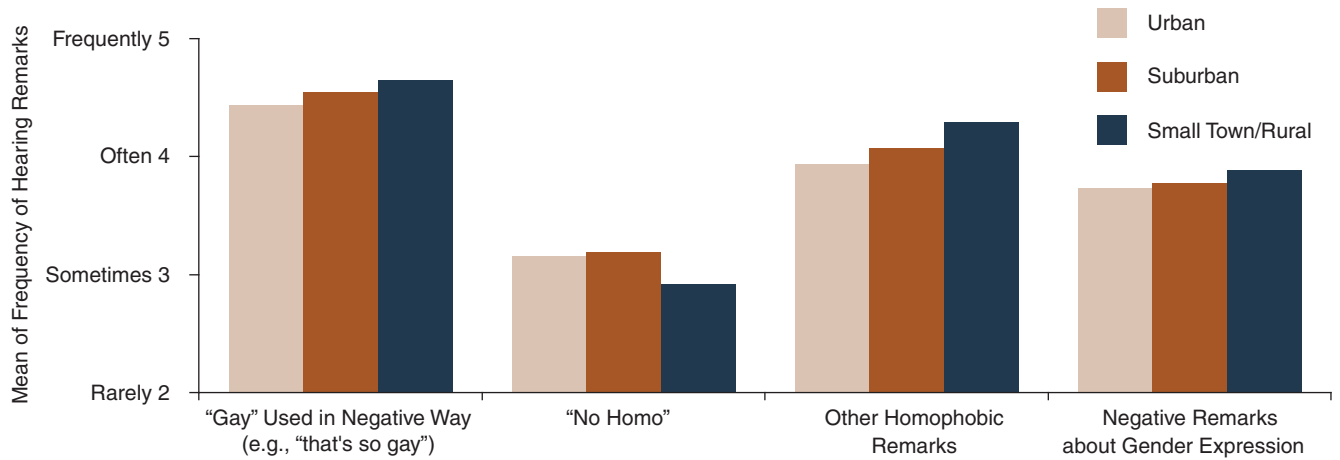


Figure 85. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Sexual Orientation by Locale
(percentage of students experiencing event "sometimes," "often," or "frequently")

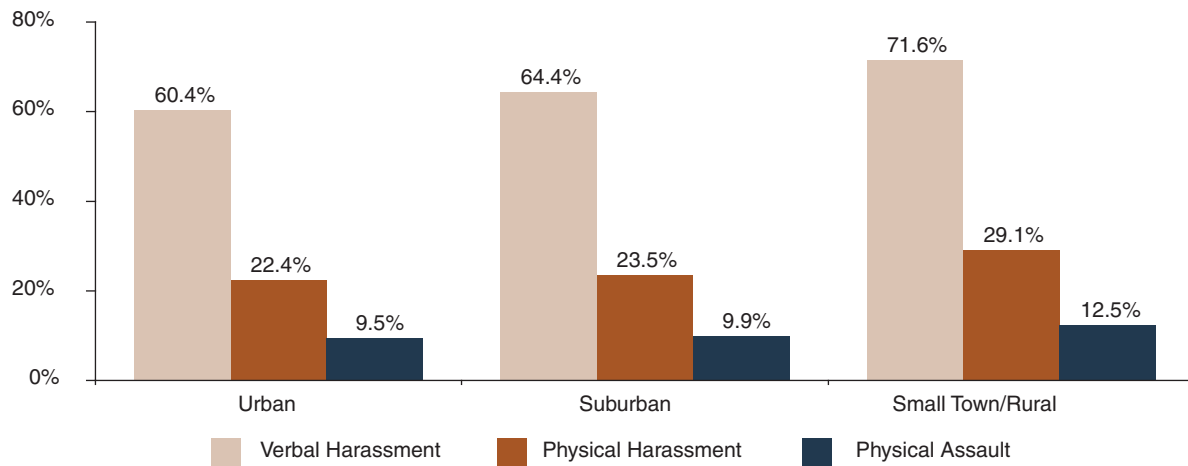
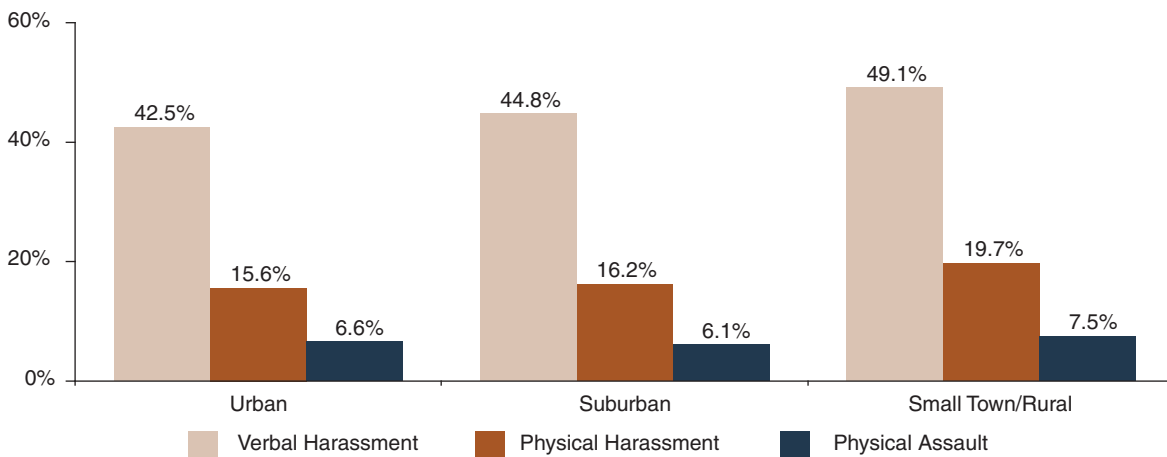


Figure 86. Experiences of Harassment and Assault Based on Gender Expression by Locale
(percentage of students experiencing event "sometimes," "often," or "frequently")



Experiences of Victimization. As shown in Figures 85 and 86, LGBT students in schools in small towns and rural areas experienced higher levels of victimization than students in other types of communities.¹⁴⁵ Specifically, compared to students in urban and suburban schools, students in rural/small town schools experienced:

- Higher levels of all types of victimization (verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault) based on sexual orientation (see Figure 85); and
- Higher levels of verbal and physical harassment based on gender expression (see Figure 86).

Students in urban schools differed from students in suburban schools only in that they reported less verbal harassment based on sexual orientation (see Figure 85).

School Resources and Supports. We also found significant differences by locale in the availability of LGBT-related resources and supports in school (see Figure 87).¹⁴⁶ Overall, LGBT students in small town or rural schools were least likely to have any type of LGBT-related resources or supports. As shown in Figure 87, compared to urban and suburban school students, LGBT students in small town and rural schools were less likely to have:

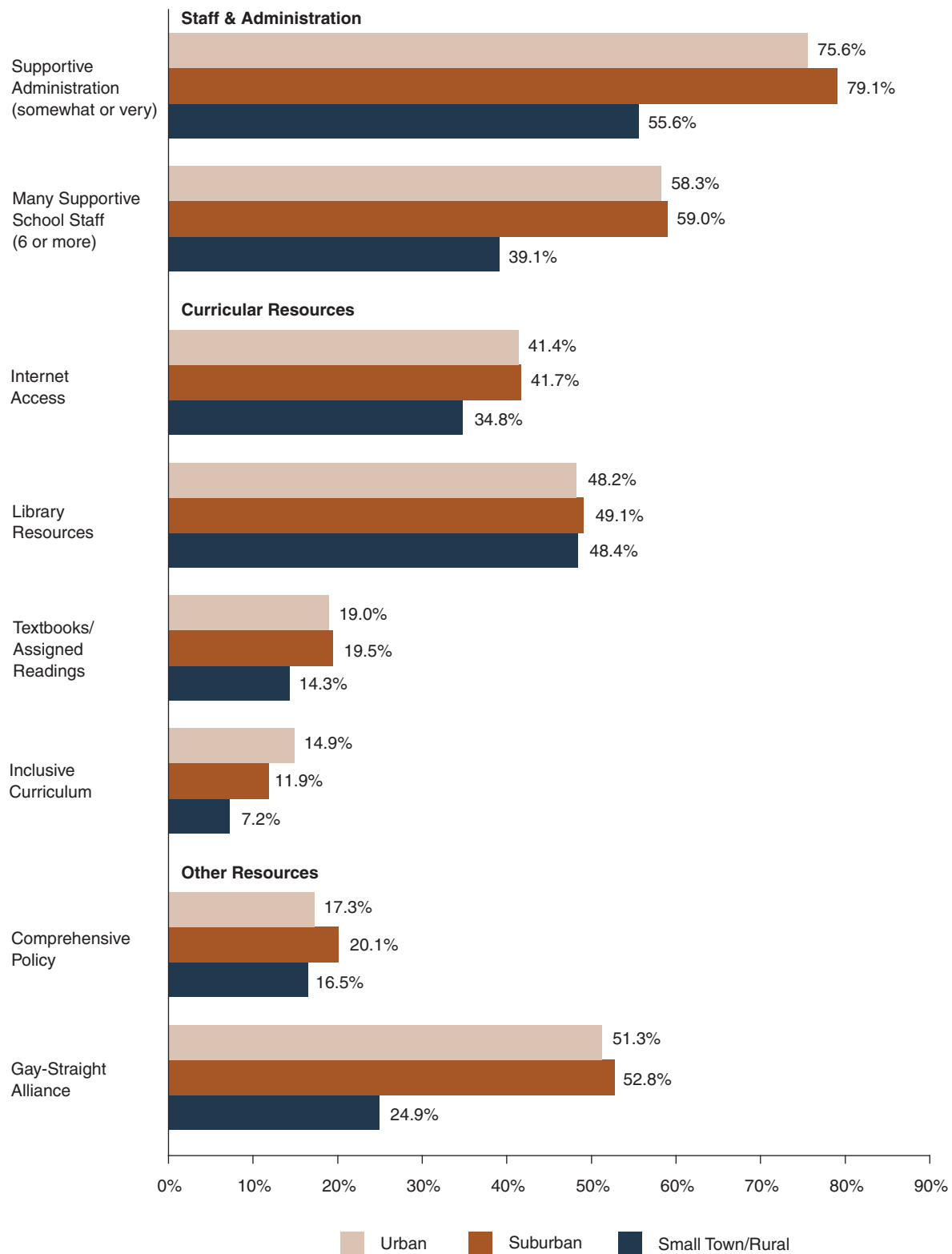
- A GSA or other student club that addresses LGBT issues;
- Curriculum, textbooks, or other assigned readings that included LGBT topics;
- Access to LGBT-related information through the Internet using school computers; and
- School staff supportive of LGBT students and a supportive school administration.

In addition, small town and rural students were significantly less likely than suburban students to have a comprehensive school harassment/assault policy, although they were not different from urban students (see Figure 87). Students in suburban schools were less likely than urban students to have curriculum that included positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events (see also Figure 87). There were no differences by locale in having access to LGBT-related information in the school library.

Similar to our findings regarding regional differences, one exception to the pattern of locale differences regarding biased language was concerning hearing the phrase “no homo.” Students in the small town/rural schools were actually less likely to hear this phrase than students in suburban or urban schools. This suggests that the phrase “no homo” may not be common vernacular in small town and rural areas, and that the locale differences we found in hearing this phrase may not be indicative of locale differences in levels of homophobia. Given that we also found regional differences with this phrase, it being predominately used in the Northeast, it would appear that the phrase “no homo” may be specific to urban and suburban areas in this region.

Research on in-school victimization in the general population of students has frequently found that urban schools are the most unsafe.¹⁴⁷ Yet our findings show that for LGBT students, schools in rural areas and small towns were the most unsafe. Compared to students in suburban and urban schools, students in rural/small town schools experienced the highest levels of anti-LGBT language and victimization based on sexual orientation or gender expression. In addition, small town/rural students had less access to LGBT-related resources and supports in school, including a GSA, curricular resources, and supportive staff. These findings highlight the importance of examining the experiences of various subpopulations of students, including LGBT students, when researching school safety issues. In addition, as various types of bullying and harassment may manifest themselves in different ways, research should specifically examine victimization based on specific student characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender expression.

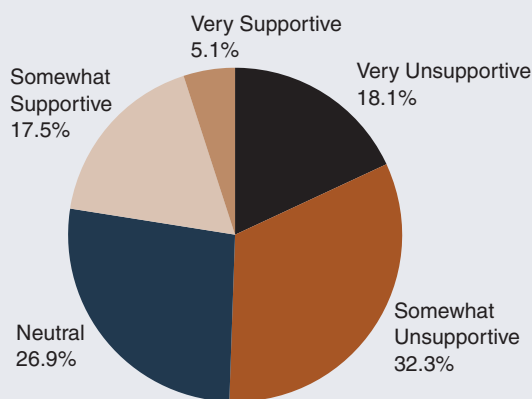
Figure 87. LGBT-Related Resources and Supports by Locale



Insight on Community Supports

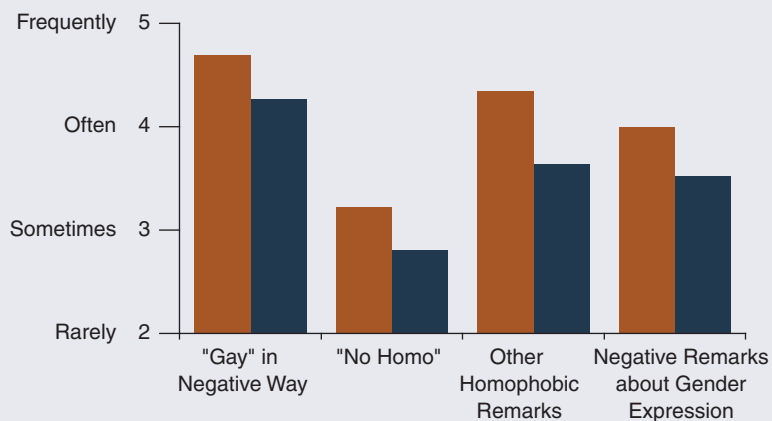
Schools can reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the communities in which they reside. Thus, the school experiences of LGBT youth may be dependent on attitudes in their local communities. In previous GLSEN research, we found that community-level variables, such as adult educational attainment, influenced school experiences of LGBT students.¹⁴⁸ In order to further examine whether community attitudes were related to LGBT students' school experiences, we asked students in our 2009 survey about the support they have in their local communities.

"In general, how supportive do you think people in your community are of LGBT people?"

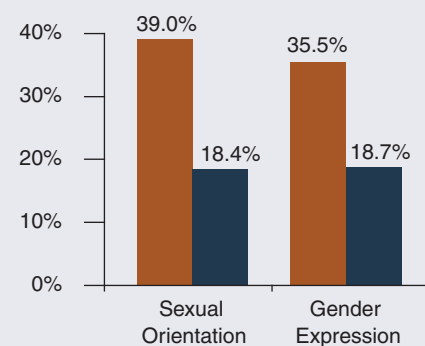


Most students (50.4%) did not believe that their community was supportive of LGBT people. Only about one in five (22.6%) students believed that people in their community were supportive of LGBT people, whereas 26.9% believed that their community was neutral towards LGBT people.

Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks by Level of Community Support for LGBT People
(mean frequency of hearing remarks)

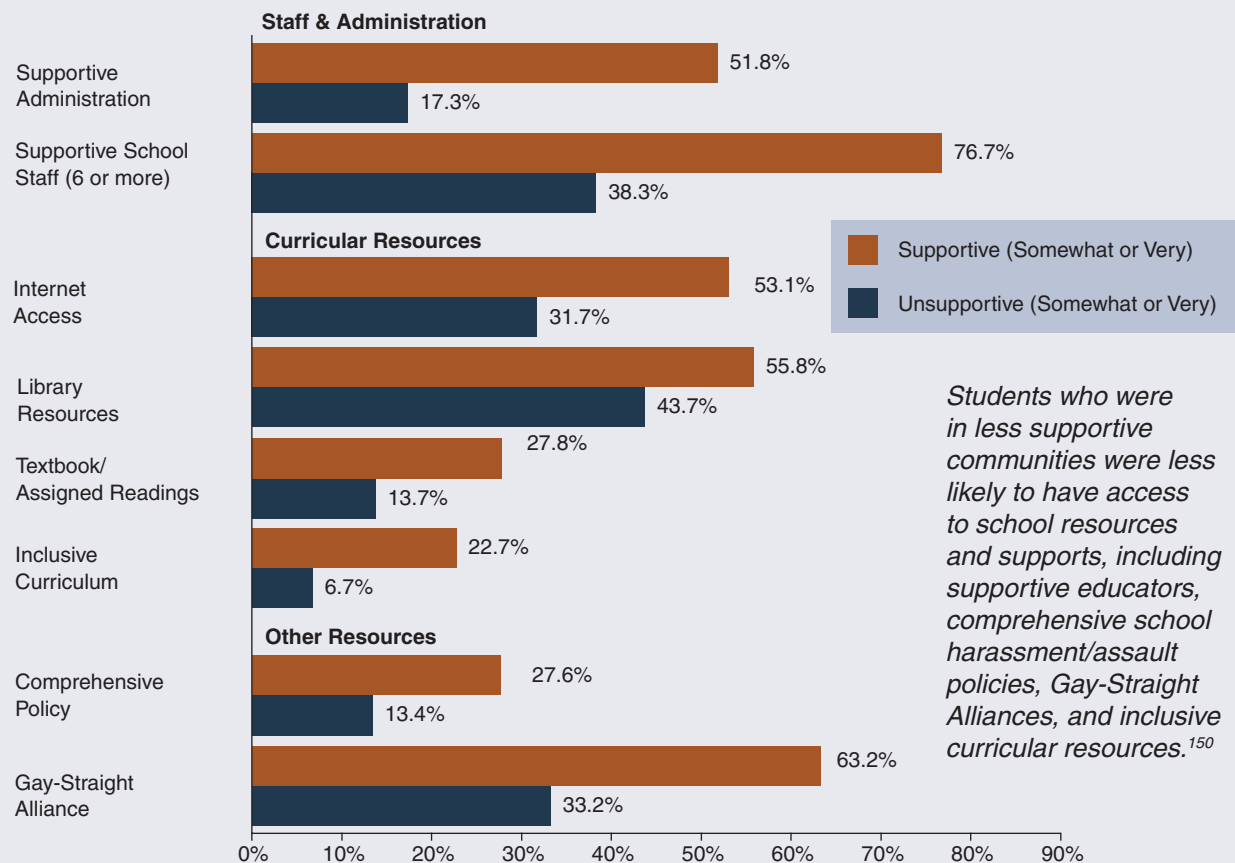


Experiences of Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression by Level of Community Support for LGBT People
(percentage of students experiencing high levels of victimization)

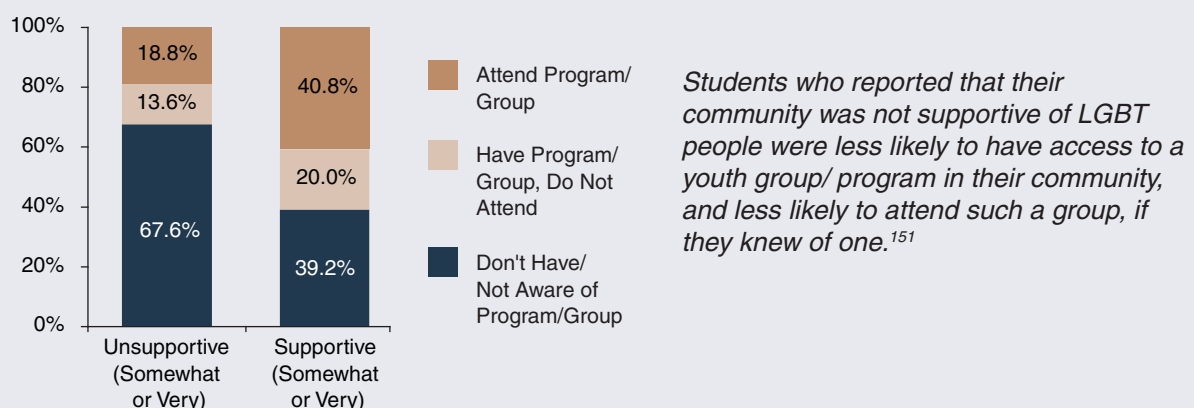


Students who were in less supportive communities were more likely to hear anti-LGBT language and experience victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression in school.¹⁴⁹

Availability of LGBT-Related Resources by Level of Community Support for LGBT People



LGBT Youth Community Group or Program by Level of Community Support for LGBT People



These findings indicate that it may be more difficult for LGBT youth to feel safe and affirmed in schools in communities that are not supportive of LGBT people. Therefore, educators and safe schools advocates need to understand which in-school interventions might be most successful for schools that are in more hostile communities. For example, it may be that discussing anti-LGBT behaviors as part of a broader training on bullying and harassment would be more effective than a training specifically focused on LGBT issues alone. In addition, in order to improve the school experiences of LGBT youth, it may be important to increase the local community's level of acceptance of and support for LGBT people. Those working to ensure safe and successful schools for LGBT youth should consider not only interventions directly affecting the school environment, but also those that might foster more positive attitudes among the community at large.

SCHOOL CLIMATE OVER TIME



Student hosting the 2009 GLSEN Respect Awards — New York. GLSEN's Respect Awards, held annually in Los Angeles and New York, recognize individual and corporate leaders who have helped propel GLSEN's efforts to ensure safe schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Indicators of Hostile School Climate Over Time



Key Findings

- Since 1999, there has been a decrease in frequency of hearing homophobic remarks at school. There was no overall change in frequency of hearing negative remarks about someone's gender expression.
- Overall, the frequency of harassment and assault based on sexual orientation and gender expression has remained relatively constant over time.

For the past 10 years, GLSEN's National School Climate Survey has remained the only study that has consistently assessed the school experiences of LGBT students nationally, and we have made it a priority to track changes in LGBT student experiences over time. In this section, we examine any such changes over time on both indicators of a hostile school climate, such as hearing homophobic remarks and experiences of harassment and assault, and on the availability of supportive resources for LGBT students in their schools, such as supportive school staff, GSAs, and inclusive curricular resources.

Anti-LGBT Remarks Over Time

Language perpetually evolves and so is the case of anti-LGBT remarks since our 1999 survey. To keep current with changes in homophobic language usage, we have modified how we ask LGBT students about anti-LGBT remarks. In 1999, because the expression “that’s so gay” was perhaps not as commonly used, we only assessed the frequency of hearing homophobic epithets, such as “fag” or “dyke.” In 2001, we began assessing the frequency of LGBT students hearing the word “gay” to mean something that is bad or worthless, as in the expression “that’s so gay.” In 2003, we began asking questions about hearing negative remarks about gender expression, such as someone not acting “feminine enough” or “masculine enough.” And in 2009, we have begun assessing the frequency of hearing the expression “no homo.”

Anti-LGBT Remarks. Since 1999, there has been a decreasing trend in the frequency of hearing homophobic epithets.^{152,153} As shown in Figure

88, there was a steady decline between 1999 and 2003: two-thirds of students in 1999 and more than half of students in 2001 reported hearing these remarks frequently in their schools, in contrast to less than half in 2003, 2005, and 2007. In recent years, between 2005 and 2009, students’ reports of hearing these types of remarks have not decreased significantly.

Expressions using “gay” in a negative way, such as “that’s so gay,” have remained the most common form of biased language heard in schools by LGBT students. However, as shown in Figure 88, there has been a very small decline in frequency of this language since 2001.¹⁵⁴ Across all years, there was no significant change in remarks about gender expression (see also Figure 88).¹⁵⁵

Biased Language from School Staff. As shown in Figure 89, there were very small fluctuations over time in the frequency with which students reported hearing homophobic remarks from school staff. Most notably, the percentage of LGBT students in 2009 who reported hearing such remarks from school personnel was lower than in 2007 (60.2% vs. 63.4%), but slightly higher than in 2005 (60.2% vs. 54.9%). Similarly, we saw only small fluctuations in the frequency of staff making negative remarks about gender expression. Although there was a significant decrease from 2003 to 2005, there have been no changes since then. It is important to note that there have not been any large changes across years; the percentages of students ever hearing school staff make homophobic remarks and remarks about gender expression have hovered around 60% since we started tracking this information in 2001.¹⁵⁶

Figure 88. Biased Language by Students Over Time

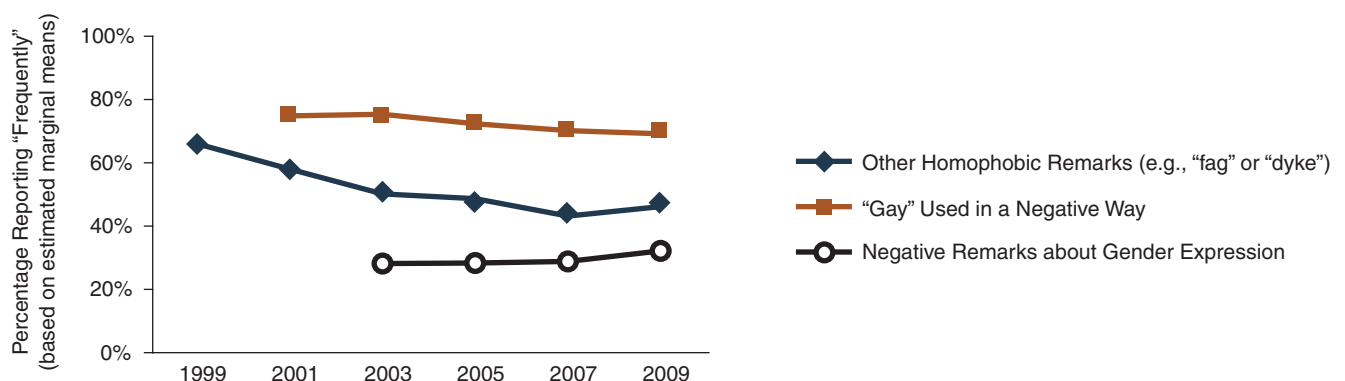


Figure 89. Biased Language by School Staff Over Time

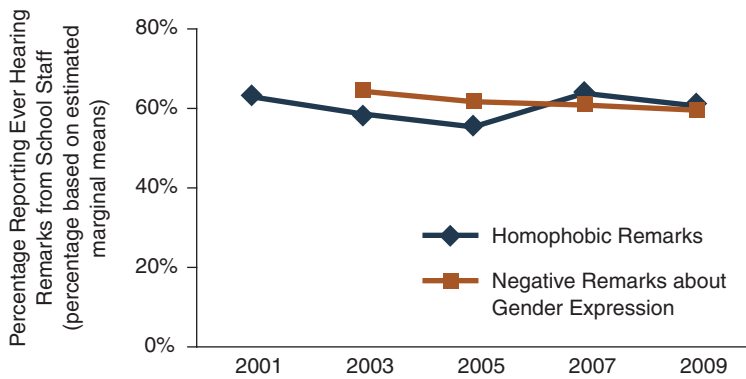


Figure 90. Rates of Intervention in Homophobic Remarks Over Time

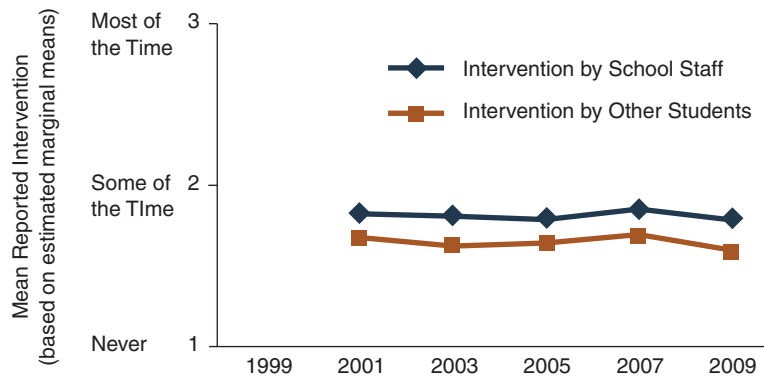
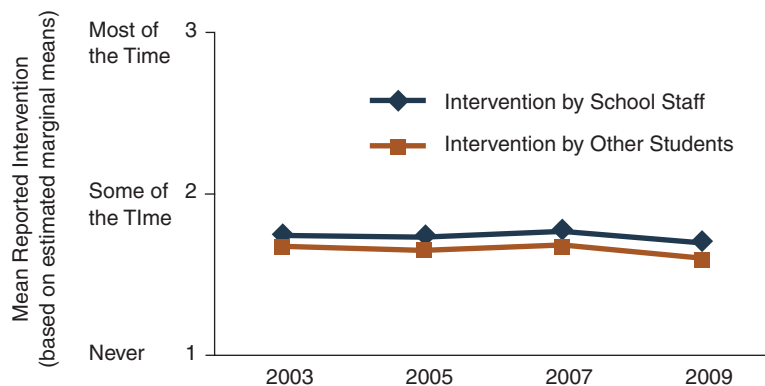


Figure 91. Rates of Intervention In Negative Remarks about Gender Expression Over Time



Intervention in Biased Remarks. In our 2001 survey, we began asking students how frequently people in their school intervened when hearing homophobic remarks in their schools; in 2003, we began asking about intervention related to negative remarks about gender expression. The level of intervention in homophobic remarks has changed little since 2001 — Figure 90 shows a relatively stable level of intervention by both staff and students over time, although there was a small decrease from 2007 to 2009.¹⁵⁷ The level of intervention in negative remarks about gender expression has also shown little change over time (see Figure 91).¹⁵⁸ However, in 2009, we saw less reported intervention by both staff and students than in previous years.

Experiences of Harassment and Assault Over Time

To understand potential changes in school climate for LGBT middle and high school students, we examined the incidence of reported harassment

and assault from 1999 to 2009. Figure 92 shows the percentages across years of LGBT students who reported frequent harassment or assault regarding their sexual orientation.¹⁵⁹ LGBT students' experiences of harassment and assault continued to remain relatively constant over time. For example, in each year since 1999, the percentage of students reporting frequent verbal harassment was around 25%. Nevertheless, from 2007 to 2009, there were small but statistically significant decreases in the frequency of all three types of harassment and assault based on sexual orientation.

With regard to harassment and assault based on gender expression, there have been only marginal changes since 2001, when we first asked questions about victimization related to gender expression, to 2009. As illustrated in Figure 93, percentages of LGBT students who reported frequently experiencing this type of victimization in school remained relatively constant across years. However, all three types of victimization based on gender expression were lower in 2009 than in 2007.¹⁶⁰

Figure 92. Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation Over Time

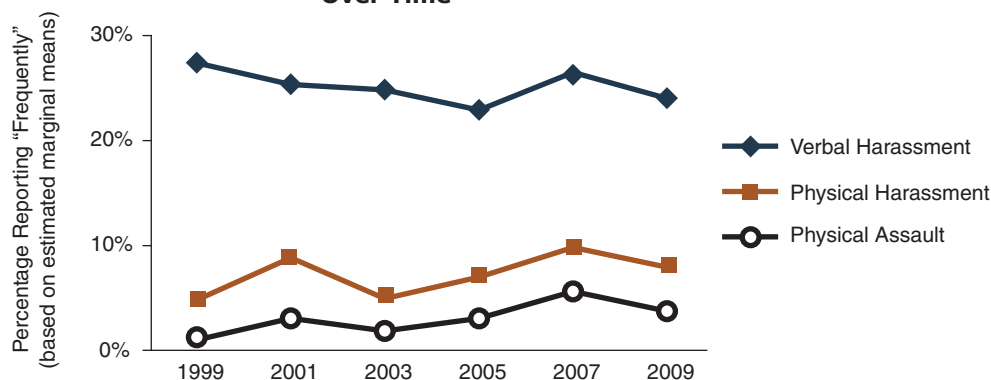
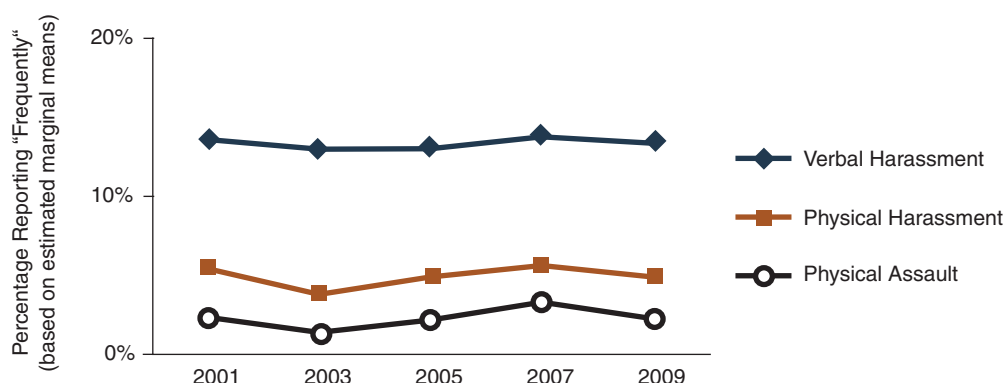


Figure 93. Victimization Based on Gender Expression Over Time



Availability of LGBT-Related School Resources and Supports Over Time

Key Findings

- There has been an increase over time in the presence of several LGBT-related resources and supports in school, specifically:
 - Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or other student clubs that address LGBT issues in education;
 - School staff who were supportive of LGBT students; and
 - LGBT-related materials in school libraries.
- There has been an increase in the presence of school harassment/assault policies over time, but no change in the presence of comprehensive school harassment/assault policies that include specific protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/ expression.

In 2001, we began asking students in the NSCS about the availability of LGBT-related resources in school, such as supportive student clubs and curricular resources. In contrast to the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks and experiences of victimization where we saw only slight changes over the years, there were sizeable and noteworthy increases in many LGBT-related resources since 2001, particularly from 2007 to 2009.

Supportive Student Clubs

There was a tremendous increase from 2001 to 2003 in the percentage of students who said they had a GSA in their school. From 2003 to 2007, there was a decrease in the reported availability of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or other student clubs that specifically address LGBT student issues.¹⁶¹ In 2009, however, we saw a substantial increase from previous years. For example, as shown in Figure 94, the percentage of LGBT

students reporting that they had a GSA or other similar club in their school increased from less than 40% in 2007 to more than 45% in 2009.

Supportive School Personnel

We also found an increase from prior years in the number of school staff who were supportive of LGBT students. Figure 95 shows the percentages of students reporting that they had any supportive staff (from 2001 to 2009) and the percentages of students reporting a high number of supportive staff (from 2003 to 2009).¹⁶² With regard to having any supportive school staff, there was a substantial increase in the percentage from 2001 to 2003, but little change from 2003 to 2007. However, with regard to the number of supportive staff in school, there was no change from 2003 to 2005, a slight decrease in 2007, but a substantial increase in 2009. In 2009, the average number of supportive staff was higher than in all previous years.

Figure 94. Availability of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) Over Time

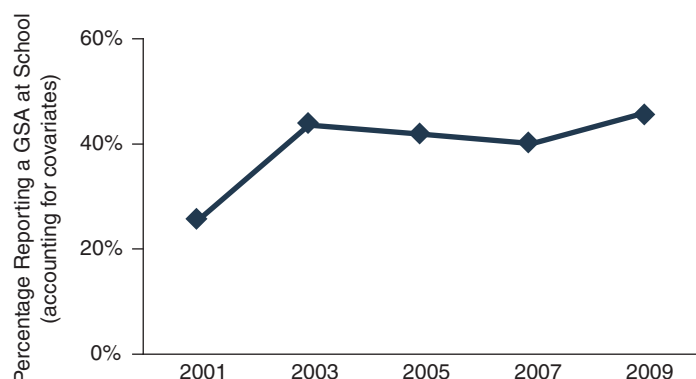
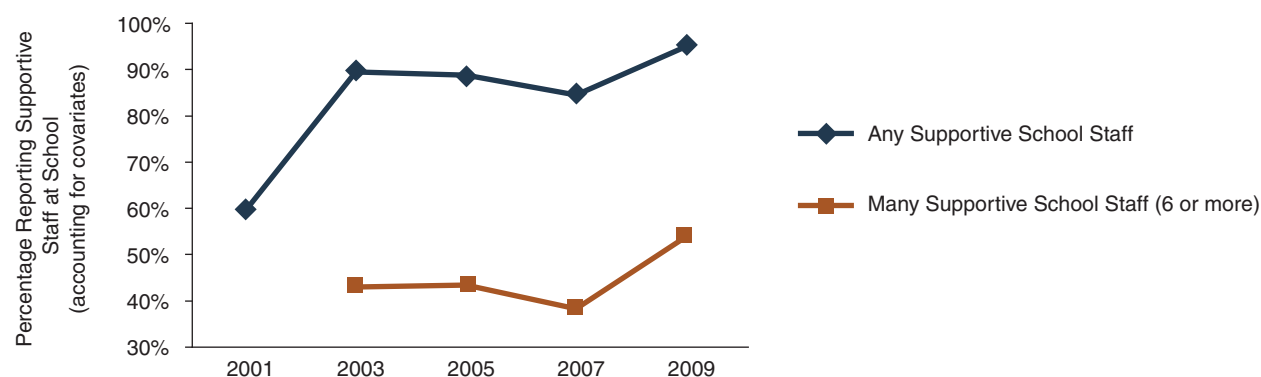


Figure 95. Availability of Supportive School Staff Over Time



Inclusive Curricular Resources

There were several substantial changes in the availability of LGBT-related curricular resources in 2009 from prior years (see Figure 96). After an increase from 2001 to 2003, the percentage of students with access to LGBT-related Internet resources through their school computers decreased in 2007, but increased in 2009. The percentage of students reporting positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events in their curriculum did not change in recent years, but there was a slight decline between 2001 and 2005. In contrast, the percentage of students who had LGBT-related resources in their school library continually increased over time, reaching the highest levels in 2009. In addition, there were no changes over time in the percentage of students reporting inclusion of LGBT-related content in their textbooks.¹⁶³

School Harassment/Assault Policies

In 2003, we began asking LGBT students if their school had a harassment/assault policy. In 2005, we also asked whether this policy included specific protections regarding sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. With regard to having any type of policy, the percentage of students in 2009 was not different than in 2007, but in 2007 and 2009 percentages were lower than 2005 and higher than 2003 (see Figure 97). With regard to comprehensive policies, those that include sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, there have been no substantive changes since 2005 — only about 20% of students from 2005 onward reported having a comprehensive policy in their school (see also Figure 97).¹⁶⁴

While considering all of the differences across time — anti-LGBT remarks, victimization, and

Figure 96. Availability of Curricular Resources Over Time

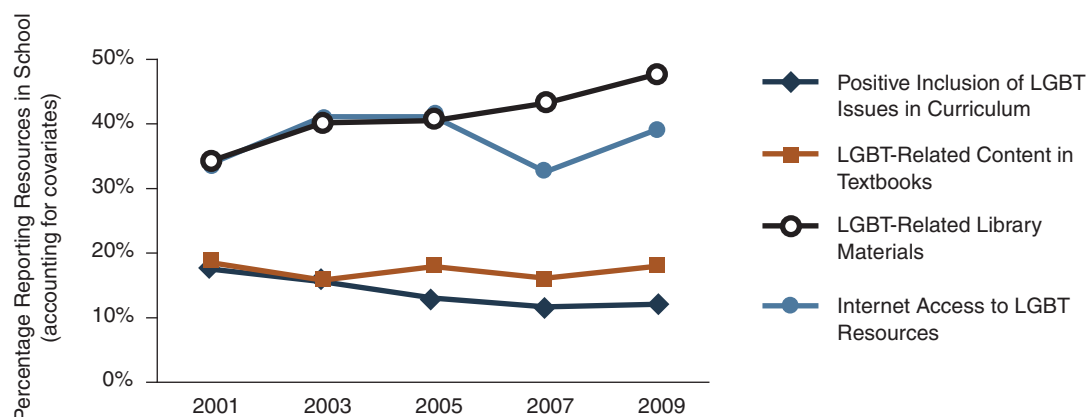
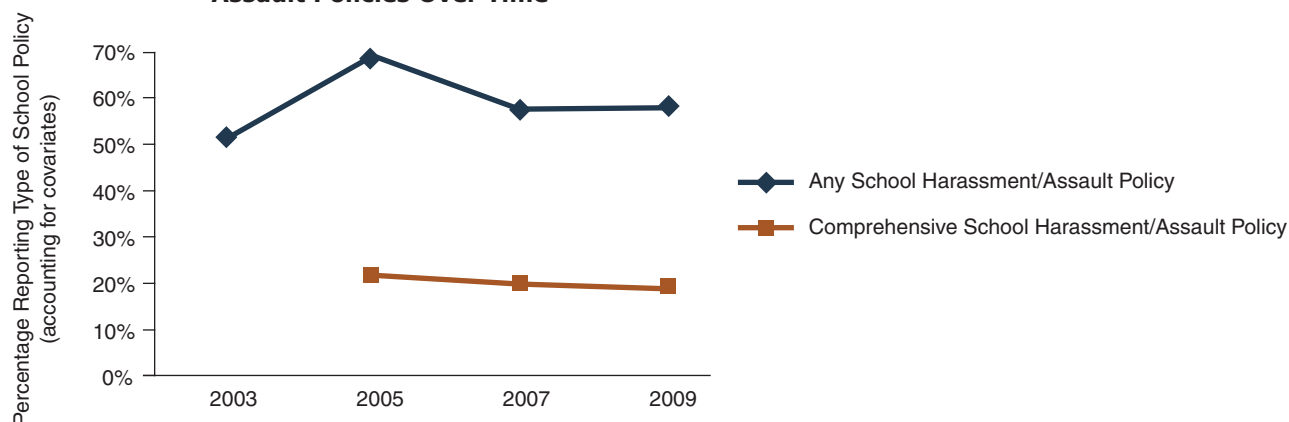


Figure 97. Prevalence of School Harassment/Assault Policies Over Time



LGBT-related resources — there were more improvements in the availability of school-based resources than in the experiences of a negative school environment. As previously discussed in the section on the utility of school resources, increased availability of resources was related to a more positive school climate for LGBT students. Given the increases over time in school resources, we might have expected to see more changes in climate than we had found. However, even with the increase in resources over time, it is still the minority of students who have these resources available to them, with the exception of having any supportive school staff person. It is also possible that it may take time for any of these supportive resources to have an effect on the larger school environment. For example, establishing a GSA in one's school may have a more immediate impact on an individual student's experience — the student has the opportunity to gain peer support and identify supportive school staff, such as the GSA advisor. The GSA may then start activities, such as advocating for a school policy or raising awareness through participation in GLSEN's Day of Silence, but these activities may take time to affect the larger school body. In that GLSEN's National School Climate Survey is the only study that continually tracks LGBT student experiences, it is vital that we continue to examine the interplay between school resources and negative school experiences and how these change over time in future National School Climate Survey reports.

In addition, the availability of LGBT-related school-based resources may serve not only to curb the existence of anti-LGBT language, harassment, and assault, but may also act as a buffer from the negative effects of such a hostile school climate on LGBT students, regardless of whether they decrease actual victimization. For example, the negative effect of victimization on a student's educational outcomes or psychological well-being may be lessened if the student has a supportive student club (e.g., GSA) or supportive staff people who provide them with comfort and assistance. Thus, the increase of some of the school-based LGBT-related resources over time may have resulted in more positive educational outcomes and healthy development for LGBT youth.

We also observed a pattern wherein the availability of school resources that are more person-driven, such as a GSA or supportive staff, increased over time, but the presence of institutional resources, such as school policies and curricular and textbook content, remained relatively similar or declined slightly over time. The one possible exception to this pattern was a substantial and steady increase in the availability of LGBT-related library materials. In that we have seen an increase in supportive school staff over the years, it may be that the increase in LGBT-related library materials may actually reflect an increase in the number of supportive school librarians. This finding also highlights the important role and influence of national education organizations and the importance of GLSEN's partnerships with them over the past 20 years. The American Library Association (ALA), for example, has consistently been an advocate against censorship and has partnered with GLSEN in providing resources educating school librarians on LGBT student issues.

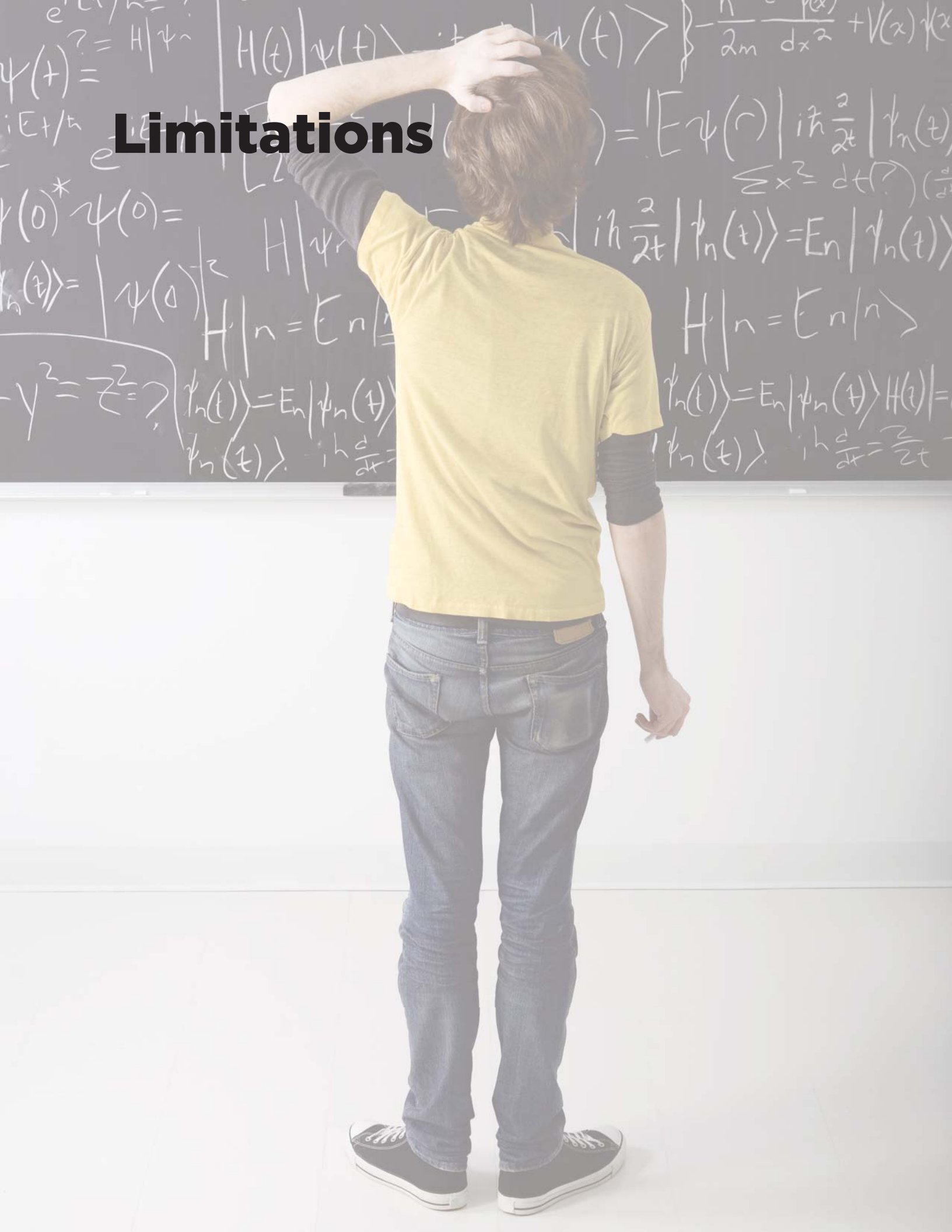
Improvements in school-based resources reflect the important work that GLSEN has done, along with other national, state, and local safe school organizations and advocates, in providing supports to GSAs and professional development for educators about LGBT student issues. However, certain school-level, systemic changes such as comprehensive harassment/assault school policy or inclusive curriculum may take time to implement, highlighting the need for further work with school boards, district administrations, and principals.

DISCUSSION

A group of four students are seated in a row, facing right, listening intently. The student in the foreground is a young man with short brown hair, wearing a black and white t-shirt and a yellow wristband. He is holding a pen over a notebook. Behind him is another young man with dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt and a gold chain bracelet. To the left is a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt and a yellow wristband. In the background, another student is partially visible. The setting appears to be a classroom or a meeting room with a plain wall.

Student Ambassadors at the 2010 GLSEN Media and Safe Schools Summit, where students learn how to use traditional and social media to raise awareness about the need to address anti-LGBT bias and behavior in schools.

Limitations



The methods used for our survey resulted in a nationally representative sample of LGBT youth. However, it is important to note that our sample is representative only of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, have some connection to the LGBT community (either through their local youth organization or through the Internet), and/or have a Facebook or MySpace page. As discussed in the *Methods and Sample* section, in addition to the traditional methods of announcing the survey, we conducted targeted advertising on the social networking sites Facebook and MySpace in order to broaden our reach and obtain a more representative sample than in years when our advertising was limited to local youth organizations and other advocacy and community groups (2005 and prior). Advertising on Facebook and MySpace allowed LGBT students who did not necessarily have any connection to the LGBT community to participate in the survey and resulted in a higher level of participation from previously hard-to-reach populations than in earlier years. However, the social networking advertisements for the survey were sent only to youth who gave some indication that they were LGBT on their MySpace or Facebook profile.¹⁶⁵ LGBT youth who were not comfortable identifying as LGBT in this manner would not have received the advertisement about the survey through the social networking sites and may be somewhat underrepresented in the survey sample. Thus, LGBT youth who are perhaps the most isolated — those without connection to the LGBT community and without access to online resources and supports — may be underrepresented in the survey sample.

We also cannot make determinations from our data about the experiences of youth who might be engaging in same-sex sexual activity or experiencing same-sex attractions but who do not identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or something else other than heterosexual (e.g., queer). Such youth's experiences may differ from the experiences of youth who do identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or something else other than heterosexual; these youth may be more isolated, unaware of supports for LGBT youth, or, even if aware, uncomfortable using such supports. Similarly, not all youth whose gender identity or gender expression is outside of cultural norms may experience or identify themselves as transgender or something other than only male or only female (e.g., genderqueer), and these youth may also

be more isolated and without the same access to resources as the youth in our survey. In order to assess the school experiences of these youth — both those that engage in same-sex activity or experience same-sex attraction and those who may be gender non-conforming but who do not identify as transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or something else other than heterosexual — large-scale population-based studies, such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), should include questions about youth's sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and conformity to traditional gender norms. In addition, large-scale surveys should include questions about youth's sexual orientation and provide opportunities for youth to identify as transgender, so that differences between LGBT and non-LGBT youth can be examined.

Another possible limitation to the survey is related to the sample's racial/ethnic composition — the percentage of youth of color was lower than the general population of secondary school students. However, given that we allow for people to select multiple options for their race/ethnicity and most national sources do not, this difference in method may account for some of the discrepancy between our sample and the general population of secondary school students. Because there are no national statistics on the demographic breakdown of LGBT-identified youth, we cannot know how our sample compares to other population-based studies and it is possible that LGBT youth of color were somewhat underrepresented in our sample. Nevertheless, our participant outreach methods have resulted in better representation over the years.

It is also important to note that our survey only reflects the experiences of LGBT students who were in school during the 2008–2009 school year and does not reflect the experiences of LGBT youth who have dropped out of school, whose experiences with hostile school climate or access to supportive resources may likely differ from those students who remained in school.

Lastly, the data from our survey is cross-sectional (i.e., the data were collected at one point in time), which means that we cannot determine causality. For example, although we can say that there was a relationship between the number of supportive staff and students' sense of belonging at school, we cannot say that one predicts the other.

Conclusions and Recommendations



The 2009 National School Climate Survey, as our previous surveys, shows that schools are often unsafe learning environments for LGBT students. Hearing biased or derogatory language at school, especially homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression, was a common occurrence. However, intervention on the part of school staff was not common. Teachers and other school authorities did not often intervene when homophobic or negative remarks about gender expression were made in their presence, and students' use of such language remained largely unchallenged. More than two-thirds of the students in our survey reported feeling unsafe at school because of at least one personal characteristic, with sexual orientation and gender expression being the most commonly reported characteristics. The vast majority of students reported that they had been verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation, and almost two-thirds had been harassed because of their gender expression. In addition, many students reported experiencing incidents of physical harassment and assault related to their sexual orientation or gender expression, sexual harassment, deliberate property damage, and cyberbullying at school.

Results from our survey also demonstrate the serious consequences that anti-LGBT harassment and assault can have on LGBT students' academic success and their general well-being. LGBT students who experienced frequent harassment and assault because of their sexual orientation or gender expression reported missing more days of school and having lower GPAs and lower educational aspirations than students who were harassed less often. In addition, students who experienced higher levels of harassment and assault had lower levels of school belonging and poorer psychological well-being.

Although our results suggest that school climate remains dire for many LGBT students, they also highlight the important role that institutional supports can play in making schools safer for these students. Steps that schools take to improve school climate are also an investment in better educational outcomes and healthy youth development. For instance, supportive educators positively influenced students' sense of school belonging, academic performance, educational aspirations, and their feelings of safety. Students attending schools that had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or a similar student club reported hearing

fewer homophobic remarks, were less likely to feel unsafe and miss school for safety reasons, and reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community. Students who reported that their classroom curriculum included positive representations of LGBT issues were much less likely to miss school, had a greater sense of school belonging, and reported less harassment related to their sexual orientation and gender expression. Unfortunately, these resources and supports were often not available to LGBT students. Although a majority of students did report having at least one supportive teacher or other staff person in school, less than half had a GSA or LGBT-related materials in the school library. Other resources, such as Internet access to LGBT-related resources and inclusive curricula were even less common. Furthermore, students in certain schools, such as middle schools or religious-affiliated private schools, from certain locales, such as small towns or rural areas, and certain regions, the South and the Midwest, were less likely than other students to report having supportive resources at their schools. These findings clearly indicate the importance of advocating for the inclusion of these resources in schools so that a positive learning environment can be ensured for LGBT students in all schools, environments in which students can receive a high quality education, graduate, and continue on to further education.

Findings from the 2009 survey indicate that comprehensive school harassment/assault policies can result in concrete improvements in school climate for LGBT students. Students at schools with harassment/assault policies that included sexual orientation or gender identity/expression reported a lower incidence of hearing homophobic language and verbal harassment based on sexual orientation. In addition, in schools with comprehensive policies teachers and other school staff were more likely to intervene when hearing homophobic remarks and students were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school authorities. Unfortunately, students attending schools with comprehensive policies remained in the minority. Although a majority of students said that their school had some type of harassment/assault policy, few said that it was a comprehensive policy that explicitly stated protection based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Along with school-level policies, state-level laws that specifically address bullying and harassment in schools can add further protections regarding student safety. Since our last report, there have been a great deal of state legislative changes; most states have now passed some type of anti-bullying or safe schools law, although most are non-enumerated laws that do not have specific protections for LGBT students. Results from our survey indicate that it is states with comprehensive legislation — enumerated laws that mention sexual orientation or gender identity/expression — that afford safer school environments for LGBT students. Safe schools advocates and education leaders may need to turn their attention to how states, particularly those with generic legislation, implement programmatic components (e.g., teacher training) of their law and examine how local districts are effecting any changes that would include protections regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Since our first National School Climate Survey in 1999, we have seen a significant increase in the availability of certain LGBT-related resources — specifically, GSAs, school staff supportive of LGBT students, and LGBT-related materials in school libraries. Given the increases over time in school resources, we had expected to see greater improvements in climate than we had found. Since 1999, there has been a decreasing trend in the frequency of students hearing homophobic epithets, which is noteworthy given the high prevalence of these remarks in schools. However, LGBT students' experiences of harassment and assault remained relatively constant over time. This may be, in part, that even with the increase in school-based resources over time, it is still the minority of students who had these resources available to them, with the exception of having any supportive school staff person. Further, it is possible that it may take time for any of these supportive resources to have an effect on the larger school environment. The results of the National School Climate Survey since 1999 show that great strides have been made in providing LGBT students with school supports, yet also show that more work is needed to create safer and more affirming learning environments for LGBT students.

Recommendations

It is clear that there is an urgent need for action to create safer and more inclusive schools for LGBT students. There are steps that concerned stakeholders can take to remedy the situation. Results from the 2009 National School Climate Survey demonstrate the ways in which the presence of comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment legislation, school harassment/assault policies, and other school-based resources and supports can positively affect LGBT students' school experiences. Therefore, we recommend the following measures:

- Advocate for comprehensive safe schools legislation at the state and federal level that specifically enumerates sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories alongside others such as race, religion, and disability;
- Adopt and implement comprehensive harassment/assault policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in individual schools and districts, with clear and effective systems for reporting and addressing incidents that students experience;
- Support student clubs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), that provide support for LGBT students and address LGBT issues in education;
- Provide training for school staff to improve rates of intervention and increase the number of supportive teachers and other staff available to students; and
- Increase student access to appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBT people, history, and events through inclusive curriculum and library and Internet resources.

Taken together, such measures can move us towards a future in which all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Appendix: Responses to Items of the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale

Table 10. School Belonging: Items from the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale¹⁶⁶

| Item | Agree or Strongly Agree | Mean | (SD) ^a |
|--|-------------------------|------|-------------------|
| The teachers respect me. | 80.2% | 3.02 | (0.78) |
| There's at least one teacher or other adult in my school that I can talk to if I have a problem. | 78.0% | 3.14 | (0.97) |
| People at my school know that I can do good work. | 78.0% | 3.02 | (0.83) |
| Teachers at my school are not interested in people like me. (reverse coded) ^b | 73.9% | 2.92 | (0.83) |
| People at my school are friendly to me. | 72.0% | 2.83 | (0.76) |
| Most teachers at my school are interested in me. | 70.0% | 2.86 | (0.86) |
| Other students at my school like me the way I am. | 65.6% | 2.74 | (0.87) |
| People at my school notice when I'm good at something. | 59.5% | 2.63 | (0.93) |
| I am treated with as much respect as other students. | 56.7% | 2.59 | (0.92) |
| I wish I were in a different school. (reverse coded) ^b | 54.3% | 2.52 | (1.10) |
| Other students in my school take my opinions seriously. | 54.0% | 2.54 | (0.86) |
| I feel like a real part of my school. | 50.1% | 2.46 | (0.95) |
| I can really be myself at school. | 46.6% | 2.41 | (1.01) |
| I am included in lots of activities at my school. | 46.0% | 2.40 | (0.98) |
| It is hard for people like me to be accepted at my school. (reverse coded) ^b | 45.8% | 2.37 | (0.96) |
| I feel proud of belonging to my school. | 43.6% | 2.33 | (1.00) |
| Sometimes I feel as if I don't belong at my school. (reverse coded) ^b | 32.9% | 2.13 | (1.00) |
| I feel very different from most other students. (reverse coded) ^b | 27.0% | 1.97 | (0.91) |

^a S.D.= standard deviation, a statistical measure of how much variance there is on a particular variable, i.e., how much are participants similar or different in their responses.

^b Reverse coded means that the statement was worded in the opposite direction of most of the other statements. In this scale, the reverse coded statements were worded in the negative. In order to compare them to the positive-worded statements and to create an average measure of school belonging, the scores associated with these items are reversed so that they reflect positive statements. For example, "Teachers at my school are not interested in people like me" can be interpreted after reverse coding as: "Teachers at my school ARE interested in people like me." Another example: "I wish I were in a different school" can be interpreted as "I DO NOT wish I were in a different school," after reverse coding.

Notes

Introduction

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- 2 Safe Schools Coalition of Washington State. (1999). *Eighty-three thousand youth: Selected findings of eight population-based studies as they pertain to anti-gay harassment and the safety and well-being of sexual minority students*. Seattle: Author.
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- 11 Because of the large sample size and the multiple analyses conducted for this report, we use the more restrictive $p > .01$ in determinations of statistical significance for our analyses, unless otherwise indicated. Mean differences in the frequencies across types of biased remarks were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace=.63, $F(5, 7188)=2414.90$, $p < .001$. Resulting univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
- 12 Mean differences in the frequencies between types of biased remarks based on gender expression were examined using a repeated measures t-test and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The effect was significant, $t(7225)=34.11$, $p < .001$.
- 13 Mean differences in the frequencies between types of biased remarks made in the presence of school staff were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace=.16, $F(3, 6328)=388.00$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
- 14 Mean differences in the frequencies of staff intervention across types of remarks were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace=.48, $F(3, 4156)=1298.05$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
- 15 Mean differences in the frequencies of student intervention across types of remarks were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace=.21, $F(3, 6316)=568.90$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
- 16 A chi-square test was conducted to compare percentages of students who felt unsafe based on religion by their religious-affiliation: $\chi^2=325.40$, $df=5$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V=.28$.

- 17 Harris Interactive & GLSEN. (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of teachers and students*. New York: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.
- 18 A chi-square test was conducted to compare percentages of students who reported feeling unsafe because of a personal characteristic: $\chi^2=2170.62$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.45$.
- 19 Chi-square tests were conducted to compare percentages of students who reported missing class or school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. Missing class: $\chi^2=589.25$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.24$. Missing days of school: $\chi^2=717.07$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.26$.
- 20 Mean differences in the frequencies of verbal harassment across types were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance: Pillai's Trace=.61, $F(5, 6921)=2181.70$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
- 21 Mean differences in the frequencies of physical harassment across types were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance: Pillai's Trace=.28, $F(5, 6997)=536.01$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
- 22 Mean differences in the frequencies of physical assault across types were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance: Pillai's Trace=.12, $F(5, 7031)=198.62$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
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Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G. & Diaz, E. M. (2009). *Harsh realities: The experiences of transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.
- 24 A chi-square test was conducted to compare percentages of students who were ever verbally harassed at school for any personal characteristic: $\chi^2=2665.48$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.50$.
- 25 For each type of harassment, a dichotomous variable (0=event never occurred, 1=event ever occurred) was created that combined responses from each sample. Chi-square tests were conducted to compare percentages of students who reported being sexually harassed, having property stolen or intentionally damaged, and being the target of rumors or lies at school. Sexual harassment: $\chi^2=1741.32$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.41$. Property theft or damage: $\chi^2=96.09$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.10$. Rumors or lies: $\chi^2=1307.99$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.35$.
- 26 For the purpose of analysis, weighted variables measuring "victimization" were created based sexual orientation and gender expression, a weighted variable measuring the frequency of victimization across the three severity levels (verbal harassment, physical harassment, physical assault) was created, giving more weight to physical harassment and, in turn, physical assault because of the increased severity of the event. Two weighted "victimization" variables were created, one for sexual orientation and one for gender expression. Scores on the "victimization" variables ranged from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 22. To test differences across groups, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with all six weighted victimization variables (based on sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, race/ethnicity, religion and disability) as dependent variables. The independent variable was created as a binary variable with responses categorized as "not a big deal" coded as 1 and other responses coded as 0. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.01, $F(6, 6640)=15.57$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
- 27 A small percentage (11.8%) of students who reported that the victimization they experienced was "not a big deal" also reported that they had been physically assaulted.
- 28 To compare differences between groups, chi-square tests were performed: talked to perpetrator – $\chi^2=23.77$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.11$; disciplined – $\chi^2=68.94$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.19$; report/referral – $\chi^2=19.57$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.10$; support – $\chi^2=16.14$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.09$.
- 29 To compare differences between groups, chi-square tests were performed: nothing done – $\chi^2=317.63$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.40$; reporting student blamed – $\chi^2=12.70$, $df=1$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.08$; staff promised to "look into it" – $\chi^2=31.03$, $p < .001$, $\Phi=.13$.
- 30 Educational Longitudinal Study: 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System. (First follow-up) [ECB/CD-ROM Public Use]. (2005). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics,

- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Services [Producer and Distributor].
- 31 A one-sample Chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of high school seniors in the NSCS who planned to pursue a graduate degree with the percentage from the with the national population: $\chi^2=90.58$, $df=1$, $p<.001$.
 - 32 A one-sample Chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of high school seniors in the NSCS who did not plan to pursue a any post-secondary education with the percentage from the with the national population: $\chi^2=32.88$, $df=1$, $p<.001$.
 - 33 The relationships between educational aspirations and victimization (using the weighted victimization scores for victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression) were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: sexual orientation – $r=-.12$; gender expression – $r=-.11$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
 - 34 The relationships between GPA and victimization (using the weighted victimization scores for victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression) were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: sexual orientation – $r=-.22$; gender expression – $r=-.20$. Means are shown for illustrative purposes.
 - 35 The relationships between missing school and victimization (using the weighted victimization scores for victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression) were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: sexual orientation – $r=.49$; gender expression – $r=.43$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
 - 36 Goodenow, C. & Grady, K.E. (1993). The relationship of school belonging and friends' values to academic motivation among urban adolescent students. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 62(1), 60–71.
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 - 37 A measure for the psychological sense of school membership was developed for use with adolescents by Carol Goodenow: Goodenow, C. (1993). The Psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools*, 30(1), 79–90.
 - 38 The relationships between school belonging and victimization (using the weighted victimization scores for victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression) were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: sexual orientation – $r=-.42$; gender expression – $r=-.37$. Means are shown for illustrative purposes.
 - 39 Gruber, J. E. & Fineran, S. (2008). Comparing the impact of bullying and sexual harassment victimization on the mental and physical health of adolescents. *Sex Roles*, 59, 1–13.
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 - 40 The relationships between the weighted victimization variables regarding sexual orientation and gender expression and depression and anxiety were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: Depression – sexual orientation: $r=.31$, gender expression: $r=.28$; Anxiety – sexual orientation: $r=.40$, gender expression: $r=.37$. Means are shown for illustrative purposes only.
 - 41 The relationships between the weighted victimization variables regarding sexual orientation and gender expression and self-esteem were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: sexual orientation – $r=-.25$, gender expression – $r=-.22$. Means are shown for illustrative purposes only.
 - 42 Pearson correlations were used to show the relationship between victimization (using the weighted victimization variables for sexual orientation and gender expression) and academic indicators; partial correlations were used to show the same relationship but with controlling for depression, anxiety, and self-esteem. The partial correlations involving "planning on attending school after high school" were significant at $p<.01$, all other correlations were significant at $p<.001$. For the correlation statistics, the range goes from -1.0, indicating a perfect negative relationship, to 1.0, indicating a perfect positive relationship. A positive relationship is one in which as one variable increases, the other variable increases; a negative relationship is one in which as one variable increases, the other variable decreases.
 - 43 The difference between the two outness variables was tested using a paired t-test. Results indicated that the mean for outness to peers in school was higher than for outness to school staff: $t(7049)=73.98$, $p<.001$.
 - 44 The relationships between outness and victimization based on sexual orientation were examined through Pearson correlations, correlations were significant at $p<.001$: outness to peers, $r=.15$; outness to staff, $r=.16$.
 - 45 The relationships between outness and victimization based on gender expression were examined through Pearson correlations, correlations were significant at $p<.001$: outness to peers, $r=.07$; outness to staff, $r=.11$.
 - 46 The relationships between outness and self-esteem were examined through Pearson correlations, correlations were significant at $p<.001$: outness to peers, $r=.15$; outness to staff, $r=.16$.
 - 47 The relationships between outness and depression were examined through Pearson correlations, correlations were significant at $p<.001$: outness to peers, $r=-.10$; outness to staff, $r=-.10$. Not pictured are the relationships between outness and anxiety, which were statistically significant at $p<.001$, although the magnitude of the relationships were low: outness to peers, $r=-.05$; outness to staff, $r=-.05$.
 - 48 The relationship between outness and school belonging were examined through Pearson correlations, correlations were significant at $p<.001$: outness to peers, $r=.17$; outness to staff, $r=.17$.
 - 49 Darling, N., Caldwell, L. L., & Smith, R. (2005). Participation in school-based extracurricular activities and adolescent adjustment. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 37(1), 51–76.
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 - 50 Passed in 1984, the federal Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. '4071(a), states that any public secondary school receiving federal funding that provides a meeting place during non-instructional time for any voluntary, student-initiated club is required to provide the same meeting facilities to all non-curriculum related clubs no matter what their "religious, political, philosophical or other" beliefs or discussions may be. This law protects students' rights to form and attend GSAs as long as there are other extracurricular clubs on campus. If a school does not permit other extracurricular clubs to meet, however, it does not have to permit a GSA. For more information see the GLSEN resource: "The Equal Access Act: What Does it Mean?" by David Buckel, Lambda Legal Defense Fund, available at http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/95-1.pdf.
 - 51 To compare differences in parental permission based on being out to a parent about one's sexual orientation or gender identity, a Chi-square test was performed: $\chi^2=11.75$, $df=1$, $p<.01$, $\Phi=.29$.
 - 52 To test differences across locale, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted with having an group or program in the community for LGBT youth as the dependent variable: $F(2,6434)=127.37$, $p<.001$. Post-hoc comparisons were considered at $p<.01$.

- 53 To test difference across region, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted with having an group or program in the community for LGBT youth as the dependent variable: $F(3,7152)=80.03$, $p<.001$. Post-hoc comparisons were considered at $p<.01$.
- 54 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentages of students who reported having a GSA in their school with the percentages of students who reported having a LGBT youth group or program in their community: $\chi^2=672.33$, $df=1$, $p>.001$, $\Phi=.31$.
- 55 The relationships between frequency of attendance at LGBT youth community group/program and at GSA were examined through Pearson correlations: $r=.28$, $p>.001$.
- 56 The relationships between outness and frequency of attendance at LGBT youth community group/program and at GSA were examined through Pearson correlations, all correlations were significant at $p>.001$ – out to school staff: $r=.23$; out to other students: $r=.17$. Means are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 57 Mean differences in comfort level talking to school staff across type of school staff member were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace=.48, $F(5, 6929)=1268.01$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered significant at a $p<.01$.
- 58 Mean differences in talking to school staff across type of school staff member were examined using repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace=.51, $F(5, 6704)=1414.52$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered significant at a $p<.01$.
- 59 To compare frequency of hearing biased remarks between students in schools with a GSA and students in schools without a GSA, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with frequency of hearing "gay" used in a negative way, "no homo," other homophobic remarks, and negative comments about someone's gender expression as the dependent variables. The results of this analysis were significant, Pillai's Trace=.03, $F(4, 7202)=47.74$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered significant at a $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered.
- 60 To compare intervention with homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with frequency of intervention by school staff and peers as the dependent variables. Results for staff intervention with biased remarks were significant: Pillai's Trace=.03, $F(4, 5084)=37.26$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 61 To compare feeling unsafe by presence of a GSA, chi-square tests were performed. Differences in feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation and gender expression were significant. Sexual orientation: $\chi^2=111.62$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.12$. Gender expression: $\chi^2=41.85$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.08$.
- 62 To compare frequency of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression by GSA presence, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted. The results of this analysis were significant, Pillai's Trace=.02, $F(2, 6992)$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered significant at a $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 63 To compare sense of school belonging by GSA presence, an independent sample t-test was performed. Means were significantly different: $t(7105)=18.30$, $p<.001$.
- 64 To compare missing days of school by GSA presence, a chi-square test was performed: $\chi^2=53.55$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.09$.
- 65 To compare the number of supportive staff members by GSA presence, a chi-square test was performed: $\chi^2=826.73$, $df=2$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=.34$.
- 66 To compare frequency of reporting incidents to school staff by GSA presence, an independent sample t-test was performed. Means were significantly different: $t(5304)=3.39$, $p<.001$. Percentages shown are for illustrative purposes.
- 67 National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME). (2003). Definition of multicultural education. Resolutions and position papers. www.nameorg.org.
- 68 To compare frequency of hearing biased remarks between students in schools with inclusive curricula and students in schools without, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with frequency of hearing "gay" used in a negative way, "no homo," other homophobic remarks, and negative comments about someone's gender expression as the dependent variables. The results of this analysis were significant, Pillai's Trace=.04, $F(4, 7187)=68.17$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered significant at a $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered.
- 69 To compare feeling unsafe by presence of inclusive curricula, chi-square tests were performed. Differences in feeling unsafe based on sexual orientation and gender expression were significant. Sexual orientation: $\chi^2=143.95$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.14$. Gender expression: $\chi^2=54.66$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.09$.
- 70 To compare frequency of victimization by presence of inclusive curricula, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with weighted victimization related to sexual orientation and gender expression variables as dependents. The results of this analysis were significant, Pillai's Trace=.02, $F(2, 6977)=61.37$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered significant at a $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages of high levels of victimization are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 71 To compare intervention with homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with frequency of intervention by school staff and peers as the dependent variables. Results for staff intervention with biased remarks were significant: Pillai's Trace=.04, $F(4, 5074)=46.79$, $p<.001$. Univariate analyses were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 72 To compare missing days of school by presence of inclusive curricula, a chi-square test was performed: $\chi^2=74.60$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.10$.
- 73 To compare sense of school belonging by presence of inclusive curricula, an independent sample t-test was performed. Means were significantly different: $t(7089)=22.35$, $p<.001$.
- 74 To compare comfort talking with a teacher about LGBT issues by presence of inclusive curricula, an independent sample t-test was performed. Means were significantly different: $t(7148)=15.02$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 75 To compare number of times talked with a teacher about LGBT issues, an independent sample t-test was performed. Means were significantly different: $t(7034)=11.76$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 76 The relationship between peer acceptance of LGBT people and degree of being out at school was examined through a Pearson correlation: $r=.19$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 77 The relationship between peer acceptance of LGBT people and sense of school belonging was examined through a Pearson correlation: $r=.54$, $p<.001$. The mean score on school belonging for students who reported that their peers were somewhat or very accepting of LGBT people was 2.9, compared to 2.2 for students who said their peers were not very or not at all accepting.
- 78 To compare level of peer acceptance of LGBT people by GSA presence, an independent sample t-test was performed. Means were significantly different: $t(7219)=17.52$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 79 To compare level of peer acceptance of LGBT people by presence of inclusive curriculum, an independent sample t-test was performed. Means were significantly different: $t(7202)=19.09$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 80 Birch, S.H. & Ladd G.W. (1997). The teacher-child relationship and children's early school adjustment. *Journal of School Psychology*, 35(1), 61–79.
- 81 The relationships between feeling unsafe and number of supportive staff was examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: feeling unsafe because of sexual orientation – $r=-.24$, feeling unsafe because of gender expression – $r=-.17$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 82 The relationship between missing school and number of supportive staff was examined through Pearson correlation: $r=-.24$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

- 83 The relationship between school belonging and number of supportive staff was examined through Pearson correlation: $r=.43$, $p<.001$.
- 84 The relationship between grade point average and number of supportive staff was examined through Pearson correlation: $r=.13$, $p<.001$. Means are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 85 The relationship between students' educational aspirations and number of supportive staff was examined through Pearson correlation: $r=.13$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 86 The two variables – feeling unsafe because of sexual orientation and feeling unsafe because of gender expression – were combined into one newly created variable indicating whether students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or their gender expression. The relationships between feeling unsafe based sexual orientation or gender expression and frequency of intervention in biased remarks (homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression) were examined through Pearson correlations. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: homophobic remarks – $r=-.17$, negative remarks about gender expression – $r=-.09$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 87 The relationships between missing school and frequency of intervention in biased remarks were examined through Pearson correlations – homophobic remarks: $r=-.14$, $p<.001$; remarks about gender expression: $r=-.05$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 88 The relationship between feeling unsafe because of sexual orientation or gender expression and effectiveness of staff intervention in harassment or assault was examined through Pearson correlation: $r=.27$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 89 The relationship between missing school and effectiveness of intervention was examined through Pearson correlation $r=-.24$, $p<.001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 90 Differences were examined using independent samples t-tests: victimization re: sexual orientation – $t(1752.04)=12.16$, $p<.001$; verbal harassment re: gender expression – $t(1756.46)=9.77$, $p<.001$.
- 91 The relationships between supportiveness of administration and availability of LGBT-related resources and supports were examined through Pearson correlations. All correlations were significant at $p<.001$: supportive staff – $r=.47$; GSA – $r=.30$; comprehensive policy – $r=.20$; inclusive curriculum – $r=.22$; textbooks/other assigned reading – $r=.15$; Internet access – $r=.23$; library resources – $r=.14$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 92 The relationships between supportiveness of administration and school staff intervention were examined through Pearson correlations. All correlations were significant at $p<.001$: intervention in homophobic remarks – $r=.27$; intervention in negative remarks about gender expression – $r=.13$; effectiveness of intervention regarding reports of harassment/assault – $r=.41$.
- 93 The relationships between supportiveness of administration and school climate were examined through partial correlations, controlling for supportive staff, student clubs, comprehensive harassment/assault policies, inclusive curriculum, textbooks and other assigned readings with information on LGBT issues, and access to LGBT-related resources in school libraries and on the Internet through school computers. Correlations were significant at $p<.001$: missing days of school in past month because of safety concerns – $r=-.09$; skipping classes in past month because of safety concerns – $r=-.10$; sense of school belonging – $r=.21$.
- 94 To test difference across school policy groups, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the homophobic remarks and the negative remarks about gender expression variables as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.01, $F(8, 14382)=9.84$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$, and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 95 To test difference across school policy groups, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the staff intervention variables as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.04, $F(4, 10196)=46.4$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$, and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 96 To test difference across school policy groups, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the weighted victimization variables based on sexual orientation and gender expression as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.004, $F(4, 13960)=7.17$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.
- 97 To test difference across school policy groups, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted with reporting to school staff as the dependent variable: $F(2,5299)=25.29$, $p<.001$. Post-hoc comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 98 To test difference across school policy groups, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted with effectiveness of response to school staff as the dependent variable: $F(2,1986)=27.40$, $p<.001$. Post-hoc comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 99 For the purposes of this report, we refer to "anti-bullying/harassment legislation" to include both laws that specifically address bullying and harassment and/or non-discrimination laws that provide specific protections related to educational access.
- 100 States that have generic legislation are: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.
- In addition to the District of Columbia, states that include protection based on sexual orientation are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. All of these states also include protection based on gender identity/expression except for Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin.
- States without any type of anti-bullying/harassment law include: Hawaii, Michigan, Montana, New York, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota. However, in New York at the time of publication, a comprehensive law had been passed by both the State Assembly and Senate and was awaiting the Governor's signature.
- 101 Illinois and North Carolina passed enumerated legislation in 2010 or in 2009, but after data collection for the 2009 survey. Prior to that, Illinois had a non-enumerated anti-bullying law, and North Carolina had no anti-bullying/harassment law. Thus, for purposes of our analysis, Illinois was considered to be in the "generic" group and North Carolina was considered to be in the "no law" group. Similarly, Wyoming passed its generic legislation in 2009 and was considered in the "no law" group in our analyses.
- 102 To examine differences across the three different types of anti-bullying/harassment laws, we conducted a series of analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs). To account for differences within groups based on state education characteristics, we conducted preliminary exploratory analyses to examine whether state law group membership was predicted by key state educational characteristics, such as amount of money spent (i.e., cost) per pupil, total enrollment, and total federal education revenue. Cost-per-pupil was the most predictive of these characteristics and was thus included as a covariate. In addition, because of the differences in how long states have had an extant law, we also controlled for whether or not the state law had been recently added or amend. Lastly, given certain demographic differences across the state law groups, we also controlled for those characteristics: age, gender, race/ethnicity, survey method (community group vs. Internet), and attendance at a local program for LGBT youth. Post-hoc group comparisons were considered at $p<.01$ unless otherwise indicated.
- 103 Results from the ANCOVAs indicate a significant main effect for state law group for all three types of homophobic remarks: "gay" used in a negative way, $F(2,6875)=14.41$, $p<.001$; other types of homophobic remarks, $F(2,6875)=12.22$, $p<.001$; "no homo," $F(2,6875)=22.80$, $p<.001$.
- 104 Results from the ANCOVAs indicate a significant main effect for state law group for negative remarks about gender expression: $F(2,6865)=8.30$, $p<.001$.
- 105 Results from the ANCOVA indicate a significant main effect for state law group for staff intervention regarding homophobic remarks: $F(2,6058)=26.48$, $p<.001$. Results from the ANCOVA

indicate that the main effect for state law group was not significant for staff intervention regarding negative remarks about gender expression, $p>.01$.

- 106 Results from the ANCOVA indicate a significant main effect for state law group for victimization based on sexual orientation: $F(2,6814)=4.67$, $p<.01$. The post-hoc comparison between "generic law" and "comprehensive law" was significant at $p<.01$, but the comparison between "no law" and "comprehensive law" was marginal at $p<.10$.
- 107 Results from the ANCOVA indicate that the main effect for state law group was not significant for victimization based on gender expression, $p>.01$.
- 108 Results from the ANCOVA indicate a significant main effect for state law group for the availability of GSAs: $F(2,6892)=182.91$, $p<.001$. Percentages shown are based on the estimated marginal means of the dichotomous GSA variable, controlling for the education and demographic characteristics.
- 109 Results from the ANCOVA indicate a significant main effect for state law group for the number of supportive school staff: $F(2,6827)=78.89$, $p<.001$. Percentages of students reporting many supportive personnel are shown for illustrative purposes, and are based on estimated marginal means of a recoded dichotomous variable: six or more vs. less than six.
- 110 Results from the ANCOVA indicate a significant main effect for state law group for the existence of a school harassment/assault policy: $F(2,6875)=76.45$, $p<.001$. Percentages shown are based on the estimated marginal means of the dichotomous policy variable, controlling for the education and demographic characteristics.

Comparisons by Demographic and School Characteristics

- 111 While "no promo homo" laws do not necessarily preclude educators from portraying transgender people and issues in a positive light in school, it is our assumption that educators who are prohibited from presenting homosexuality in a positive light would not be including positive representations of transgender people/issues in the classroom. Thus, we believe that "no promo homo" laws may also stigmatize transgender individuals and restrict transgender youth from learning about themselves and their communities in school.
- 112 States that prohibit the positive portrayal of homosexuality in schools include: Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah.
- 113 To examine differences by "no promo homo" law group, we conducted a series of analyses of covariance controlling for the covariates: state level cost-per-pupil, recent law changes, age, gender, race/ethnicity, survey method (community group vs. Internet), and attendance at a local program for LGBT youth. Significant main effects were found for: homophobic remarks from school personnel: $F(1,6877)=24.032$, $p<.001$; reporting harassment/assault to school personnel: $F(1,1889)=9.72$, $p<.01$.
- 114 To examine differences by "no promo homo" law group, we conducted a series of analyses of covariance controlling for the covariates: state level cost-per-pupil, recent law changes, age, gender, race/ethnicity, survey method (community group vs. Internet), and attendance at a local program for LGBT youth. Significant main effects were found for: effectiveness of staff intervention: $F(1,6058)=199.59$; comprehensive school policy: $F(1,6807)=38.14$; number of supportive school personnel: $F(1,6807)=41.40$; GSA availability: $F(1,6807)=124.59$. All were significant at $p<.001$.
- 115 Given the relatively small sample sizes of Middle Eastern/Arab American and Native American/American Indian LGBT students, we did not include these two groups in the comparisons of school experiences by race or ethnicity.
- 116 To compare feeling unsafe by race/ethnicity, chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of sexual orientation: $\chi^2=70.55$, $df=4$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=.10$. Unsafe because of gender expression: $\chi^2=28.89$, $df=4$, $p>.001$, Cramer's $V=.07$.
- 117 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by race/ethnicity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the six harassment and assault variables as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.02, $F(24,$

26716)=4.67, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

- 118 To compare feeling unsafe by gender, chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of sexual orientation: $\chi^2=32.13$, $df=3$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=.07$. Unsafe because of gender expression: $\chi^2=344.47$, $df=3$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=.22$.
- 119 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by gender identity, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the six harassment and assault variables as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.07, $F(18, 20673)=27.03$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 120 Sausa, L. A. (2005). Translating research into practice: Trans youth recommendations for improving school systems. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education*, 3(1), 15–28.
- 121 We compared percentages of students avoiding bathrooms and locker rooms at school with a multivariate analysis of variance where the weighted variables for victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression were included as covariates. Differences significant: Pillai's Trace=.06, $F(6, 13784)=70.11$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.
- 122 To compare feeling unsafe by sexual orientation, chi-square tests were conducted. Unsafe because of sexual orientation: $\chi^2=227.51$, $df=3$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=.18$. Unsafe because of gender expression: $\chi^2=118.69$, $df=3$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=.13$.
- 123 To compare experiences of harassment and assault by sexual orientation, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the six harassment and assault variables as dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.05, $F(18, 20817)=18.11$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 124 To test difference across grade levels, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the biased remarks variables (the three homophobic remarks variables and the negative remarks about gender expression variable) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.002, $F(4, 6919)=4.22$, $p<.01$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered.
- 125 To test difference across grade levels, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the six harassment and assault variables (verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault based on both sexual orientation and gender expression) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.02, $F(6, 6711)=5.30$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 126 To compare differences across grade levels, a series of one-way analysis of variances were conducted with each resource and support variable as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses were significant at $p<.001$ – GSAs: $F(1,6948)=331.02$; supportive staff: $F(1,6979)=109.50$; supportiveness of administration: $F(1,6849)=27.21$; comprehensive policy: $F(1,6937)=12.30$; inclusive curriculum: $F(1,6936)=24.97$; textbooks/other assigned readings: $F(1,6932)=12.26$; library resources: $F(1,6936)=81.63$; access to Internet: $F(1,6905)=28.50$. Post hoc comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 127 Dinks, R., Kemp, J., & Baum, K. (2009). *Indicators of school crime and safety: 2008 (NCES 2009-022/ NCJ 226343)* (No. NCES 2009-022/ NCJ 226343). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

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- 128 Horn, S. S., & Nucci, L. (2003). The multidimensionality of adolescents' beliefs about and attitudes toward gay and lesbian peers in school. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 36(2), 136–147.

- 129 To test difference across school type, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the biased remarks variables (the three homophobic remarks variables and the negative remarks about gender expression variable) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.04, $F(8, 14216)=36.25$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered.
- 130 To test difference across school type, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the six harassment and assault variables (verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault based on both sexual orientation and gender expression) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.01, $F(12, 13794)=7.12$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 131 To compare differences across school type, a series of one-way analysis of variances were conducted with each resource and support variable as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses were significant at $p<.001$ – GSAs: $F(2,7130)=62.31$; supportive staff: $F(2,7053)=54.20$; supportiveness of administration: $F(2,7026)=76.57$; comprehensive policy: $F(2,7122)=9.41$; inclusive curriculum: $F(2,7166)=36.90$; textbooks/other assigned readings: $F(2,7110)=27.06$; library resources: $F(2,7119)=11.29$; access to Internet: $F(2,7806)=48.09$. Post hoc comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 132 Brookmeyer, K. A., Fanti, K. A., & Henrich, C. C. (2010). Schools, parents, and youth violence: A multilevel, ecological analysis. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 35(4), 504–514.
Dinkes, R., Kemp, J., & Baum, K. (2009). *Indicators of school crime and safety: 2008 (NCES 2009-022/ NCJ 226343)* (No. NCES 2009-022/ NCJ 226343). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.
- 133 National Education Association (2010). Charter Schools. Available at: <http://www.nea.org/home/16332.htm>.
- 134 The Center for Education Reform (2009). K–12 Facts. Available at: http://www.edreform.com/Fast_Facts/K12_Facts/.
- 135 To compare differences between charter schools and non-charter public schools in hearing biased language (the three types of homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression), victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression, and feeling unsafe because of sexual orientation and gender expression, a series of multivariate analyses of variance were conducted. The results of these analyses were not significant.
- 136 To compare differences between charter schools and non-charter public schools in access to LGBT-related resources and supports in school (supportive staff, supportive administration, comprehensive harassment/assault policy, Gay-Straight Alliances, LGBT-inclusive curriculum, LGBT-related information included in textbooks/assigned readings, access to LGBT-related information and resources in school library, access to LGBT-related information and resources on Internet through school computers), a series of analyses of variance were conducted. The results of these analyses were not significant.
- 137 To compare differences between charter schools and non-charter public schools in school belonging and student acceptance of LGBT people, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted: Pillai's Trace=.003, $F(2, 6262)=9.48$, $p<.001$.
- 138 Students were placed into region based on the state they were from – Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, DC; South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia; Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming; West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington.
- 139 To test difference across region, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the biased remarks variables (the three homophobic remarks variables and the negative remarks about gender expression variable) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.05, $F(12, 21465)=29.25$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered.
- 140 To test difference across region, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the six harassment and assault variables (verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault based on both sexual orientation and gender expression) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.01, $F(18, 20814)=4.84$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 141 To compare differences across region, a series of one-way analysis of variances were conducted with each resource and support variable as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses were significant at $p<.001$ – GSAs: $F(3,7176)=184.63$; supportive staff: $F(3,7098)=87.41$; supportiveness of administration: $F(3,7068)=109.32$; comprehensive policy: $F(3,7165)=56.71$; inclusive curriculum: $F(3,7161)=26.20$; library resources: $F(3,7164)=10.00$; access to Internet: $F(3,7131)=31.14$. The analysis for textbooks/other assigned readings was not significant, $p>.01$. Post hoc comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 142 In addition, compared to students in the Northeast, students in the West were less likely to have supportive school staff, a supportive school administration, a comprehensive school policy, and access to LGBT-related information through the Internet using school computers.
- 143 Specifically, students in the Midwest were less likely to have a GSA in their school, access to LGBT-related information in their school libraries, school staff who were supportive of LGBT students, and a supportive school administrations. In addition, students in the Midwest were less likely to attend a school with a comprehensive harassment/assault policy and to have access to LGBT-related information through the Internet using school computer than those in the Northeast, but were not different in these areas from students in the West.
- 144 To test difference across locale, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the biased remarks variables (the three homophobic remarks variables and the negative remarks about gender expression variable) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.04, $F(8, 12864)=28.40$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered.
- 145 To test difference across locale, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with the six harassment and assault variables (verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault based on both sexual orientation and gender expression) as the dependent variables. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace=.02, $F(12, 12486)=8.42$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and effect sizes were also considered.
- 146 To compare differences across locale, a series of one-way analysis of variances were conducted with each resource and support variable as the dependent variable. The results of these analyses were significant at $p<.01$ – GSAs: $F(2,6455)=193.05$; supportive staff: $F(2,6392)=113.88$; supportiveness of administration: $F(2,6366)=75.74$; comprehensive policy: $F(2,6445)=5.49$; inclusive curriculum: $F(2,6441)=26.19$; textbooks/other assigned readings: $F(2,6434)=10.0$; access to Internet: $F(2,6416)=11.67$. The analysis for library resources was not significant, $p>.01$. Post hoc comparisons were considered at $p<.01$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 147 Dinkes, R., Cataldi, E. F., & Lin-Kelly, W. (2007). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2007* (No. NCES 2008021). Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education.
- 148 Kosciw, J.G., Greytak, E.A. & Diaz, E.M. (2009). Who, what, where, when, and why: Demographic and ecological factors contributing to hostile school climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(7), 976–988.
- 149 The relationships between supportiveness of community of LGBT people and frequency of hearing anti-LGBT biased language were examined through Pearson correlations, all were significant at $p<.001$ – “gay” in a negative way: $r=-.24$; “no homo”: $r=-.13$; other homophobic remarks: $r=-.31$; negative remarks about gender expression: $r=-.21$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

The relationships between supportiveness of community of LGBT people and in-school victimization (using the weighted victimization variables for sexual orientation and gender expression) were examined through Pearson correlations – sexual orientation: $r = .26$, $p < .001$; gender expression: $r = .20$, $p < .001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

- 150 The relationships between community supportiveness and access to LGBT-related resources and supports were examined through Pearson correlations, all were significant at $p < .001$ – supportive school staff: $r = .39$; supportive school administration: $r = .36$; Internet access: $r = .20$; library resources: $r = .11$; textbooks/assigned reading: $r = .15$; inclusive curriculum: $r = .21$; comprehensive policy: $r = .16$; Gay-Straight Alliance: $r = .27$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 151 The relationships between community supportiveness and existence of/frequency of attendance at LGBT youth community group/program were examined through Pearson correlations – having/being aware of youth community group/program: $r = .24$, $p < .001$; attendance at youth community group/program: $r = .10$, $p < .001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

School Climate Over Time

- 152 To test differences across years in use of anti-LGBT language and intervention in the use of this language, we conducted a series of one-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVA). Covariates were chosen based on preliminary analysis that examined what locational and school characteristics and personal demographics were most predictive of survey year membership, specifically: participation in a community group or program for LGBT youth (“youth group”), age, racial/ethnic group, and method of taking the survey (paper vs. Internet version).
- 153 In 1999, frequency of hearing homophobic remarks were assessed using a 4-point scale, and in the subsequent year, a 5-point scale was used. To accommodate these differences for this variable, the two end points (“never” and “frequently”) were kept and the midpoints (“rarely” and “sometimes”) in 1999, and “rarely,” “sometimes,” and “often” in 2001 to 2009 were recoded into a single midpoint. The main effect for survey year was significant for other homophobic remarks, indicating mean differences across years: $F(5, 16875) = 5.17$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc group comparisons among years were considered at $p < .01$.
- 154 To test differences across years in the use of “gay” in a negative way, an ANCOVA was performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for survey year was significant, indicating mean differences across years: $F(4, 16493) = 7.41$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc group comparisons among years indicated a marginal difference between 2009 and 2007 ($p < .05$) and significant differences between 2009 and all other years ($p < .01$).
- 155 To test differences across years in the use of negative remarks about gender expression, an ANCOVA was performed controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. A composite of the two gender expression variables was computed to test across years, using the highest frequency of each type of remark. The main effect for survey year was not significant.
- 156 To test differences across years in the frequency of homophobic remarks from school staff, ANCOVAs were performed controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for survey year was significant for homophobic remarks, indicating mean differences across years: $F(4, 16464) = 13.02$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc group comparisons among years were considered at $p < .01$. The main effect for survey year was not significant for negative remarks about gender expression.
- 157 To test differences across years in the frequency of intervention in homophobic remarks, ANCOVAs were performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years as well as the frequency of hearing these remarks. For student intervention, the main effect for survey year was not significant. For staff intervention, the univariate F for survey year was significant: $F(4, 14642) = 5.78$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc group comparisons among years were considered at $p < .01$.
- 158 To test differences across years in the frequency of intervention in negative remarks about gender expression, ANCOVAs were performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years as well as the frequency of hearing these remarks. For staff intervention, the main effect for survey year

was significant: $F(3, 12070) = 6.65$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc comparisons were considered at $p < .01$ and showed only a significant difference between 2007 and 2009. For student intervention, the univariate F for survey year was also significant: $F(3, 15051) = 14.54$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc group comparisons among years were considered at $p < .01$ and showed that the mean level of student intervention was lower in 2009 than in 2007 and 2003.

- 159 To test differences across years in the experiences of victimization based on sexual orientation, a multivariate analysis of covariance was conducted with the three harassment/assault based on sexual orientation variables as dependent variables. In order to account for differences in sampling methods across years, youth group participation, age, race/ethnicity, and survey method were used as covariates. In 1999, frequency of harassment and assault was assessed using a 4-point scale, and in the subsequent years, a 5-point scale was used. To accommodate these differences for this variable, the two end points (“Never” and “Frequently”) were kept and the midpoints (“Rarely” and “Sometimes”) in 1999, and “Rarely,” “Sometimes,” and “Often” in 2001 to 2009 were recoded into a single midpoint. The multivariate results were significant: Pillai’s Trace = .006, $F(15, 50070) = 7.21$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$.
- 160 To test differences across years in the experiences of victimization based on gender expression, a multivariate analysis of covariance was conducted with the three harassment/assault based on gender expression variables as dependent variables. In order to account for differences in sampling methods across years, youth group participation, age, race/ethnicity, and survey method were used as covariates. The multivariate result was marginally significant at $p < .05$. The univariate F test was significant at $p < .01$ for physical assault and marginally significant for verbal and physical harassment at $p < .05$. For all three variables, the mean was lower in 2009 than in 2007.
- 161 To test differences across years, an analysis of covariance was conducted with the GSA variable as the dependent variable. In order to account for differences in sampling methods across years, youth group participation, age, race/ethnicity, and survey method were used as covariates. The univariate effect for survey year was significant: $F(4, 16475) = 39.86$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc group comparisons were considered at $p < .01$. Percentage was significantly higher in 2009 than 2007, 2005, and 2001 but not different from 2003.
- 162 In 2001, students were asked a question about whether there were any supportive school personnel in their school. In 2003 and beyond, we asked a Likert-type question about the number of supportive school personnel. In order to include 2001 in the analyses, we created a comparable dichotomous variable for the other survey years. To test differences across all years, an analysis of covariance was conducted with the dichotomous variable as the dependent variable. In order to account for differences in sampling methods across years, youth group participation, age, race/ethnicity, and survey method were used as covariates. The univariate effect for survey year was significant: $F(4, 16475) = 119.01$, $p < .001$. To test differences in the number of supportive school personnel (in 2003 and beyond), we tested the mean difference on the full variable. The univariate effect for survey year was significant: $F(3, 15484) = 165.03$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc group comparisons were considered at $p < .01$.
- 163 To test differences across years in curricular resources, a multivariate analysis of covariance was conducted with four dependent variables (inclusion of LGBT-related topics in textbooks, Internet access to LGBT-related information/resources through school computers, positive curricular representations of LGBT topics, LGBT-related library materials). In order to account for differences in sampling methods across years, youth group participation, age, race/ethnicity, and survey method were used as covariates. The multivariate results were significant: Pillai’s Trace = .012, $F(16, 65224) = 12.59$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects and post-hoc comparisons by survey year were considered at $p < .01$.
- 164 To test differences in the percentage of students reporting a school harassment/assault policy, two analyses of covariance were performed (any type of policy and comprehensive policy), controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for survey year for any type of policy was significant, indicating mean differences across years: $F(3, 15657) = 32.09$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc group comparisons among years were considered at $p < .01$. The main effect for survey year for having a comprehensive policy was not statistically significant at $p < .01$.

Discussion

- 165 The MySpace advertisements for the survey were sent to 13 to 18 year-olds who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) on their MySpace profile. MySpace does not provide the opportunity for youth to identify as transgender in their profile fields. Because Facebook does not include specific profile fields for identifying sexual orientation and, like MySpace, does not provide the option for users to identify themselves as transgender, a variety of strategies were used to target LGBT adolescents on Facebook: ads were sent to 13 to 18 year-olds who indicated on their profile that they were a female seeking other females or a male seeking other males; ads were also shown to 13 to 18 year-olds who used the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender somewhere in their profile. In order to be included in the final sample, respondents had to have identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, or as a sexual orientation or gender that would fall under the LGBT “umbrella” (e.g., queer, genderqueer).

Appendix

- 166 A measure for the psychological sense of school membership was developed for use with adolescents by Carol Goodenow: Goodenow, C. (1993). The Psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools*, 30(1), 79–90.

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